PETER L. BERGER AND THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION

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PREFACE

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Two general questions underlie all social inquiry: *What holds society together?* and *What holds the individual together?* They may be more existentially formulated as follows: *What holds* us *together?* and *What holds* me *together?* Although historically sociology has concerned itself mostly with the first question and psychology with the second, many practitioners of both disciplines have come to see that answers to the two questions must be sought together. The present study is grounded in the sociological perspective. It owes a special debt to that tradition which is called the sociology of knowledge. I have sought, nevertheless, to be sensitive to the psychological dimension as well.

My particular concern in this essay is that area of social scientific inquiry which is called the sociology of religion. In my first graduate-level course in the discipline, Professor Charles Y. Glock told us that the time was at hand for the formulation of "a sociology of the sociology of religion." It is necessary, he told us, that we seek to discover how events in the "secular" world and the personal commitments of sociologists influence work in the field. The present study is understood as a contribution to such a sociology of the sociology of religion.

I have chosen as the focus of my explorations the career of one prominent contemporary sociologist of religion, Peter L. Berger. Berger is well known to students and teachers of sociology and theology and to large numbers of readers who have no professional interest in those fields. Many, I am sure, would feel that an analysis of his writings would be a worthwhile enterprise quite apart from any larger purpose --

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and I hope that this study will meet the needs of readers who come to it on those terms. *My* purpose, however, is to use Berger's career as a "location" from which to analyze recent developments in the way people think about religion and, in particular, about the sociology of religion. I begin, therefore, with a brief history of the field and with the isolation of some conceptual issues which are currently important. My exposition of Berger's work seeks at every point to show connections between his thought and that of others in the field. The concluding chapter presents some elements of a "new" sociology of religion. The main theoretical discussions are in chapters 1, 4, and 9. Chapters 2 and 3 explore Berger's early career. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 treat the theological, psychological, and political implications of his thought. Chapter 8 discusses Berger's most recent work and offers an overview and appraisal of his paradigmatic career.

I do not view this study as a biography of Peter Berger. In the same conversation in which I told him of my desire to write about his work Berger promised his cooperation but immediately added that while he would conceal nothing of his *intellectual* history, he would *reveal* nothing of his *personal* history. This study, then, offers no exposé, no "inside Peter Berger" type analysis. But I believe that I have made some discoveries about the man and his vocation which may help us see him more clearly and understand his work better. I have, therefore, included some reflections on the relationship between Berger's biography and his work.

Berger is a complex thinker. Further, the present situation and recent evolution of the sociology of religion resist tidy explanation.

Nevertheless, as Berger himself has insisted, it is the business of the sociologist to look for generalizations. The sociologist, therefore, tends to be dissatisfied with the simple accumulation of facts; he seeks always to relate the facts to one another and to shape them into general statements (theories) about the phenomena of which they are part. This is a risky but necessary activity. As Berger has written: "The motto of the sociologist is very likely to be: . . . Have the courage to make mistakes but, above all, have the courage to conclude." (*Noise*, 106) I have sought to do my work in that spirit.

My decision to write about a contemporary theorist does not mean that I am convinced that his work is of timeless importance. It is my judgment, however, that what Berger has said in the last decade or so matters now. It is, therefore, appropriate that it be discussed now -- while it is still warm. But to write about one who is still alive and to discuss issues which are part of contemporary debate necessarily entails an openness to feedback, a willingness to listen. I look forward, therefore, to responses to this essay and I am especially grateful to many people who have given me their reactions to preliminary presentations of portions of it: my dissertation committee (Professors Guy E. Swanson, John C. Bennett, and Robert Kimball), my colleague Professor Chris Downing, my students at Rutgers University, and those who heard and reacted to my presentations at meetings of the American Academy of Religion and the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion in the fall of 1972. I am also indebted to Peter Berger for many challenging and constructive conversations -- and for his cooperation and encouragement.

In order to minimize the reader's dependence on the footnotes, I shall usually cite Berger's books by short title in parentheses in the text.

Short title:	Full title and date:
Vision	*The Precarious Vision*, 1961
Noise	*The Noise of Solemn Assemblies*, 1961
Invitation	*Invitation to Sociology*, 1963
Work	*The Human Shape of Work*, 1964
Construction	*The Social Construction of Reality*, 1966
Canopy	*The Sacred Canopy*, 1967
Rumor	*A Rumor of Angels*, 1969
Marxism	*Marxism and Sociology*, 1969
Movement	*Movement and Revolution*, 1970
Sociology	*Sociology: A Biographical Approach*, 1972

Abbreviated titles of articles will also be used on occasion. A full bibliography of works by Peter Berger, chronologically arranged, will be found at the end of this study.

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Chapter 1 THE SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION AND PETER BERGER

Some Introductory Concerns

> Our generation is characterized by
> the fact that man has become
> problematic to himself, and that
> he is aware of his problematic
> nature.
>
> Max Scheler, 1928

I. The contemporary religious situation; the values crisis. II. The relationship between sociology and religion. III. Brief history of the sociology of religion. IV. The problem of a definition of religion. V. Substantive and functional definitions of religion. VI. Berger's importance; overview of his career.

I

From the death of Max Weber in 1920 until the late 1950s there was little interest in the theoretical dimension of the sociology of religion.[1] There is at present a renewed serious interest in this task -- a renewal which can be better understood from a sociology of knowledge perspective.

As Peter Berger is fond of pointing out, human beings give relatively little self-conscious attention to particular aspects of social reality until they become problematic, that is, until they stop working. He writes:

> Specific procedures of universe-maintenance become necessary when the symbolic universe has become *a problem*. As long as this is not the case, the symbolic universe is self-maintaining, that is, self-legitimating by the sheer facticity of its objective existence in the society in question. (*Construction*, 105)

It was Augustine who, amid the collapse of the Roman Empire, gave persuasive expression to the worldview which became dominant in the West. There followed, to be sure, all manner of minor shifts of emphasis and modifications but the essential elements of Augustine's version of the Christian story comprised -- almost unchallenged -- the master paradigm in the West for well over a thousand years.

There was little need for self-conscious reflection about the nature of the social order and of the ultimate realities which underlay it until the ancient routines of European society were upset by the changes we associate with the coming of the modern period -- the Renaissance, the Reformation, the development of modern science, and especially, the transformation of the human situation by an ever-accelerating technological mastery of nature. Sociology, self-conscious reflection on the nature of the social order, may be understood as an intellectual response to the break-up of the old order and as part of the search for new paradigms within which life makes sense.[2] In the writings of the fathers of the sociology of religion -- Comte, Marx, Durkheim, Weber, and others -- we see reflected the urgency of a search for meaning made necessary by the collapse of older systems of order and of the moral consensus they made possible.

It is not without significance that sociology essentially began with the sociology of religion. The breakdown of the social consensus -- already apparent to many intellectuals in the nineteenth century -- was seen by Marx, Durkheim, Weber, and Freud as a vote of no confidence in the symbol system, the master paradigm. Thus each of them gave considerable attention to the ways in which symbol systems function and to the difficult business of meaning-making in the wake of the collapse of some long-dominant patterns of meaning.

There was no need for sociological and psychological inquiry into the religious situation of Western society as long as religion in Europe and in North America seemed firm and non-problematic. Through most of the history of the West since Augustine most people have felt secure in their religion. Even after the Reformation broke up the Roman Catholic monopoly on the worldview business in Europe, a slightly more pluralis-

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tic but still Christian way of looking at things retained its taken-for-granted-ness for the overwhelming majority of people. Challenges from the world of secular thought shook Christian hegemony in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries but the faith of the masses escaped unscathed and the rise of neo-orthodox theology after World War I seemed to betoken a return to religious "business as usual."

Today the religious situation is much less secure than it once was. The neo-orthodox consensus which seemed to work for a while is no longer compelling for large numbers of people. A search for alternatives seems to be in progress in many circles. There is evidence to suggest that ours is a time marked by (1) a decline in commitment to and participation in traditional religious forms[3] and (2) passionate quests for religious alternatives -- some of which issue in interest in a wide variety of para-religious options.[4]

At first glance this co-presence of disaffection with traditional religious forms and high interest in alternative forms appears paradoxical to some. But upon further reflection we discover a certain logic here. It has been suggested by a number of thinkers -- as different from one another as Abraham Maslow[5] and J. Milton Yinger[6] -- that human beings in all times and places are concerned with certain fundamental questions which might well be called religious. Yinger writes:

> Rather than ask *if* a person is religious, we ask *how* he is religious. How does he define "chaos"? What concerns him most fundamentally? What actions follow as a result of these definitions and concerns? How widely shared are they? What groups form around them? We may discover that there are many hidden religions around us which haven't been apparent because we expected all religions to look like the most familiar ones. 7

Such questions are timeless. It is only the ways in which we pose and answer them that vary. As old answering mechanisms come to be seen as inadequate, people turn some of their attention to the search for alternative forms. Sociology of religion becomes especially important -- and problematic -- at precisely the times of such shifts. Change forces us to address again those "macro-questions" which captured the attentions of Durkheim and Weber: How is religion related to the maintenance of particular social structures? What is the nature of that minimal moral consensus without which society disintegrates or life in society becomes nasty, brutish, and short? What holds us together?

Doubts about the value of existing institutions, questions about their function and their future, and experimentation with new institutional forms thus appear together in history. When particular elements of the social order are seen to be inadequate, the media of that society will give space to a discussion which seeks explanations for the breakdown and which proposes alternatives. This is what is happening today -- and not only with regard to the religious consensus.

Consider, for example, the ambivalence American society seems currently to feel about higher education. At precisely that time in our social history when so many people are doubting the value of our existing educational institutions, we find great interest in schools and an unprecedented commitment to experimentation with new educational forms. Just when some of our brightest college-age young people are choosing to drop out of school -- or not to attend at all -- we are investing lots of thought, time, money, and media space to trying to answer basic questions about the nature and function of education and we are experimenting in search of better ways of utilizing the educational resources of the society.

This same conjunction of dissatisfaction with the status quo and the self-conscious search for workable alternative manifest itself in American society's current preoccupation with marriage and the family. The existing structures are wobbly -- as the divorce rate suggests. At the qualitative level many Americans are voicing dissatisfaction with their own marriages and other forms of intimate association. And so we find that books, magazines, and television talk shows are devoting considerable attention to ways of improving family life and some of the more adventurous among us are experimenting with alternate forms of the "family."

In many areas of social life just now certain failures of functionally-necessary systems are being experienced. Thoughtful people are pressed to ask *Why?* and *What next?* Our contemporary crises are the concerns of the many rather than of the few because of our affluence, the power of our communications media, and our near-universal literacy.

Ous several "meaning crises" are deeply interrelated and there is a certain amount of artificiality in any scheme of analysis that separates them. This study, nevertheless, will focus on the specific problem of the social meanings of the *religious* crisis. Such a narrowing of scope will, I believe, facilitate the analysis of the whole. Indeed, because the religious problem concerns itself with the search for master paradigms, paradigms within which other systems and concerns make sense, this particular "compartmentalization" of the problem may have significant payoff pertinent to a host of other problems.

It is to precisely this project of interpreting the breakdown of traditional religious worldviews in the West and exploring the future of religion in an increasingly "secular" society that Peter Berger has devoted much of his intellectual energy. For this and for other reasons which I shall elaborate below I believe that his career can serve as a fit focal point for instructive explorations into these matters.

II

The relationship between sociology and the object of its study has been expressed by Peter Berger as follows:

> Sociology must always be traced back to the fundamental experiences of the society within which it originated. More than almost any other discipline, sociology reflects the social conditions under which it emerges and is produced. (*Sociology*, 42)

In a similar fashion the sociology of religion can and must change with changes in religious patterns in the society. Some theoretical constructs may be of such a broad level of generality as to remain valid despite major shifts in religious consciousness but much of what the sociology of religion has to say is derivative from religion as it is conceived and practiced in society.

To say this in no way suggests that sociology is not an autonomous pursuit. Neither does it mean that the sociology of religion is some kind of "superstructure" of which religion is the "substructure." Rather, I am suggesting that we recognize the extent to which sociology of religion is "dependent" upon religion. Without it we would have nothing to study. When it changes we have something new to study. Indeed, a principal concern of the sociology of religion is to explain the emergence of new religious patterns, to see their causes with a kind of clarity

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that the involved religionist usually fails to obtain. The sociologist of religion presumes to transcend the experiences of the transcendent which others report.

Religious phenomena -- theologies, patterns of worship, ethical convictions, and the like -- are the raw data with which the sociolgy of religion works.[8] Our discipline, having learned its lessons from Max Weber, Mircea Eliade, and others, knows that its first obligation is to "shut up and listen," to let religionists tell their stories in their own way. *Then*, hopefully, we can find patterns -- perhaps even causes and effects -- in the seemingly random reporting of the religious values of others.

We are dependent, then, upon the religions and the religionists we study for our *data* -- and our interpretations may well have to be reformulated as new data are made available to us. Ideally, however, we do *not* take our modes of analysis and interpretation from the religious groups we study. Rather, we are committed to the scientific method, to the unqualified application of logic to our data, and to patient historical and comparative inquiry.

On occasion, however, a scientific student of this of that phenomenon may be more dependent than he realizes upon the taken-for-granted assumptions of those whom he studies. This is most apt to happen if he is *among* those whom he studies. I shall argue that the sociology of religion has been more dependent than is appropriate on the assumptions of Western religion, that our science has taken not only its data but also some of its ways of explaining that data from the religious phenomena it studies. I shall argue further that our discipline must become

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more responsive than it has been to the new *data* which religious communities generate but that we must become *less* dependent upon the interpretive models which are developed in those communities. In particular, I shall suggest that the continued use of the classical dichotomy between the "sacred" (or "religious") and the "profane" (or "secular") may now hamper explanation of some important aspects of the religious situation of the contemporary West.

Perhaps it is appropriate here to comment on the relationship between sociology of religion and theology. As I have suggested above and as I shall argue throughout this essay, an integral relationship obtains between the two disciplines. They have interests in common and developments in one almost inevitably affect developments in the other. I do not, however, wish to argue that sociology of religion and theology are the same; I do not favor collapsing the two into one category. There are, to be sure, situations in which the distinction between the two is difficult to maintain but we must persist in the effort.

Theology and sociology of religion are perhaps best understood as the "inside" and "outside" (respectively) of the phenomenon of religion.[9] They represent two conceptually different starting points and utilize different methods. If theology is "faith thinking" as has sometimes been maintained, then perhaps sociology of religion is "thinking about the social expressions of faith thinking." If theology is the quest for an understanding of the Transcendent, then perhaps sociology of religion is the imaginative transcendence of that quest. But, note well, both theology and sociology of religion, if taken seriously, work toward the construction of a paradigm that will contain the other -- and therein lies the

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source of their inevitable conflict. I shall have more to say about that conflict -- and its resolution -- in the chapters which follow.

III

Let us turn now to a brief overview of the religious history of the West. Here we shall be able to observe a dialectical relationship not only between social conditions and religious patterns but also between religious patterns and the modes of explanation utilized by intellectuals who understand themselves to be standing outside of the religious communities.

For long centuries prior to the emergence of sociology as a self-conscious form of inquiry the worldview identified with the Roman Catholic Church enjoyed something of a monopoly in the West. Marginal phenomena such as the tiny Jewish minority and the encounter with Islam did not seriously challenge Catholic hegemony. Considerable disruption resulted from the rise of Protestantism but, after all, Protestantism claimed to be a reformed version of the same Christian worldview and it left unchallenged such fundamental notions as the existence of a God who acts decisively in human affairs and the saving power of Jesus.

Religion became a *problem* in the West only when the basic presuppositions of both Catholic and Protestant Christianity were challenged by the emergence of the sciences and by the application of scientific discoveries to the means of production, that is, by technology. Then, for the first time, many people began to wonder about some basic religious "truths" which their ancestors had taken for granted for centuries.

From the Enlightenment on, many intellectuals assumed that traditional religious worldviews were going out of business, that such ways of looking at the world were demonstrably inadequate. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it became fashionable in intellectual circles to predict the quick demise of supernaturalism and to revel in the anticipation of a world free of superstition. The deistic and Unitarian options were comfortable "homes" for many such people. Other free thinkers felt they could do without any institutionalization of their "faith." It was in such a context that Feuerbach celebrated the discovery that "God" was simply a shorthand way of talking about mankind's greatest achievements and fondest hopes. Marx believed that the more or less definitive critique of religion had been achieved by Feuerbach and so devoted himself to the "demystification" of economics and politics, that is, to the business of creating meaning in a post-theistic world. His treatment of religion as alienating superstructure helped lay the foundation for the sociology of religion.

By the end of the nineteenth century the intellectual community was largely uninterested in religion. It was seen as having been superseded by the scientific worldview. Religious intellectuals were putting the finishing touches on a liberal theology which sought detente with the spirit of the age and the religion of the masses was being modified by pietism and the social gospel.

Emile Durkheim and Max Weber revived intellectual interest in religion as something more than a museum piece and "invented" the sociology of religion. Both saw religion as an important part of any social order and, although neither of them was an adherent of a traditional religion, both realized that the apparent demise of these religions was not in fact the unvarnished blessing earlier intellectuals had thought.

Both Weber and Durkheim concerned themselves with the relationships between religious phenomena and other aspects of social reality. Neither was content to speak of religion only in terms of existing religious institutions. Both -- especially Durkheim -- were concerned to discover what would *function* as religion after the demise of the traditional forms. Weber developed the notion that Protestantism carried within itself the seeds of its own secularization and thus made *changes* in religious consciousness an important part of the sociology of religion. Durkheim, manifesting a chastened version of the interests of Comte and Saint-Simon, was concerned with the devising of secular religion-surrogates which could help society cohere after the obsolescence of the Christian worldview became apparent to the masses.

For the most part these concerns were not followed up after the death of Weber in 1920. The 20s and 30s were marked by some good anthropological studies of religion -- particularly those of Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown -- and by considerable interest in comparative religions. During this same period energy began to be invested in microscopic studies of existing religious institutions in Europe and in the United States and this kind of research was expanded in the 40s and 50s. Much of this research was paid for by the churches themselves. It was a kind of "market research" which made possible more effective planning by the churches. After World War II advances in computer technology facilitated still more ambitious survey research in the sociology of religion.

But throughout the period from the death of Weber until the late 50s there was relatively little interest in the theoretical aspects of the sociology of religion. The work of Karl Mannheim manifested some interest in religion but Mannheim died before he could give systematic expression to these concerns.[10] The comprehensive social theory of Talcott Parsons gave some attention to religious values (which he called constituitive symbols) as one subtype of shared symbolic systems (culture). In Parsons' evolutionary perspective religion was seen to be losing the protection it had enjoyed in the form of state churches and moving instead toward the status of voluntary associations. But Parsons has not given us a comprehensive book-length statement of the sociology of religion as such.[11]

It is worth noting that this lack of interest in theory was characteristic not only of the sociology of religion. After World War I American sociology as a whole turned to empirical investigations and largely abandoned theoretical considerations. This shift corresponds with what Robert Friedrichs has called the loss of the "prophetic mode" of earlier sociology.[12]

The relative lack of interest in the theoretical dimension of the sociology of religion in the three or four decades following the death of Weber has no single simple cause. The complex relationships among dimensions such as the historical, the religious, and the sociological are best described in dialectical terms and any reductionistic explanation ought to be suspect. There may, however, be value in taking note of some of the events of the period under consideration and of the forms of theological expression which accompanied them. Then we may seek to under-

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stand how these relate to the shape of sociological thinking during the same period.

The liberal theology of the nineteenth century was an appropriate mode of religious expression for a period of relative peace, prosperity, and progress. From the comfortable libraries of the well-to-do intelligensia of both the secular and the ecclesiastical varieties the situation of Western humanity looked good and the prognosis was for continued improvement. Science was solving many of mankind's perennial problems and most "knowledgeable" people were quite optimistic about the future. In such a context little need for a traditional deity is felt. Religious traditions come to be seen as "data" to be worked over and played with by intellectuals. Men who feel that they are doing quite well on their own feel little need for a God who acts.

World War I did much to dash the optimism of Western man and to silence those intellectuals who were cheerleaders for progress and the "modern" consciousness. Europeans responded almost immediately to Karl Barth's call for a return to the "timeless truths" of the Christian faith. Americans, spared the destruction of the War, were less quick to embrace neo-orthodoxy but in time the emptiness of the Great Depression and the multiple horrors of another World War caused them to take up a chastened orthodoxy as a substitute for the more liberal theologies with which they had flirted. Religion became again a key to survival. It was no longer seen as being susceptible to playful reshaping by curious intellectuals. Put differently, religion returned to *sacred* status.

Neo-orthodox hegemony spanned roughly four decades of Western history. Let us adopt the convention that dates its reign from 1920 to 1960.

Through most of this period for all but a few mavericks Western religion was again a secure element of the taken-for-granted world. There was little talk of "radical" theologies. Barth and Brunner replaced Harnack and Ritschl on seminary reading lists. Even potentially radical thinkers such as Rudolf Bultmann and Paul Tillich were pressed into service as apologists for the new orthodoxy. H. Richard Niebuhr began his career as a sociologist of religion but moved to historical and theological writing with considerable interest in religious institutions.

During this period of neo-orthodox dominance the sociology of religion had little to say apart from descriptive comments on the religious institutions of the day. Any form of theoretical labor which might show religious institutions and theological systems to be human products with mundane social causes seemed inappropriate. The religious situation was too secure to invite the kind of analysis that Durkheim and Weber and others had pioneered. It was not until the late 1950s and early 60s that the Western religious consensus again began to totter -- and only then could there be a renaissance in the sociology of religion.

The period beginning with the late 50s has been marked by considerable re-examination of religious matters in Europe and in the United States. This rethinking has commanded the energies of both theologians and sociologists and also of large numbers of persons who have no professional interest in religious affairs.

In the late 50s American churches were full and new ones were being built but some observers both within and outside of the churches were doubtful about the commitment of the church-goers. Will Herberg, for example, in his influential *Protestant-Catholic-Jew* (1955) argued that churches and synagogues in this country did little more than provide their members with somewhat distinctive ways of being good Americans.[13] A young Peter Berger attributed the apparent success of institutional religion to an almost perverse child-centeredness of the suburban family. Churches thrived, Berger insisted, because the offered "moral education" to the children of church members and provided activities in which the whole family could take part.[14]

In the 60s there was a small decline in participation in the activities of institutional religion but many observers saw evidence of deepened commitment in the religious response to the civil rights challenge, in the attempt to forge a "secular" theology, and in the Roman Catholic effort at self-renewal symbolized by the Second Vatican Council. As the 60s ended, evidence from survey research and the popular media pointed to a further decline in church attendance and in the number of people for whom their "religious preference" was truly the integrating paradigm within which the rest of life was interpreted.[15] A large-scale search for alternatives to Judaism and Christianity seemed to be gathering steam. There was a renewal of interest in astrology. The *I Ching* gave to many the same kind of inspiration daily Bible readings once gave to their grandparents. Interest in Eastern thought and various mystical paths took a quantum leap.[16] Drug mysticism sustained many young people while others embraced neo-fundamentalism with a fervor which often embarrassed their nominally-religious parents. College youth mostly stayed away from the churches but they came in large numbers to religious studies programs at colleges and universities. Contemporary America is a smorgasbord of religions and quasi-religions. The number of options facing the "seeker,"

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the religious consumer, is infinitely large and it is expanding. The do-it-yourself option is among them: Syncretisms of every variety are possible.[17]

It is worth noting that the religious and quasi-religious activities of the young *prior* to about 1968 were mostly *social* (civil rights and anti-war activism, secular theology, Roman Catholic renewal, etc.) while those of the period *since* 1968 have been more *personal* (neo-fundamentalism, Eastern religions, drug mysticism, etc.). Concern with the question *What holds* us *together?* has been largely replaced by the more existential concern *What holds* me *together?* This same shift of focus may be seen in the way in which experimentation with communes and other alternate forms of intimate association have taken up much of the energy formerly invested in political activism. Peter Berger was one of the first social analysts to name and study this privatization of the quest for meaning.[18]

IV

As a result of the pluralism which marks the American religious situation, the definition of the word *religion* has become problematic. There is no consensus -- even within the discrete communities of the sociologists and the theologians -- as to just what it includes and excludes. This definitional problem will be one of the principal foci of this study.

It is worth noting that this problem concerning the definition of religion is a relatively new one. Historically "everyone knew" what re-

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ligion was and was not. In pre-Reformation Europe there was only one religion, Roman Catholicism, and those who were most "sophisticated" in religious matters were usually quite confident of their ability to distinguish true religion from false religion, orthodoxy from heresy. From the Reformation forward there were several varieties of religion in the West but there was general agreement that the Protestant faiths were, in fact, religions. Again, with the exception of the small Jewish community, nearly all Europeans were attached to religious groups which claimed to be the purest expression of Christianity.

In the recent past in Europe and in the United States the notion of *religion* was almost co-extensive with the preserves of the Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Jewish faiths. Laymen were comfortable with this commonsense understanding of religion. There were no cultural crises pressing the society toward re-examination of the concept. Religious professionals and sociologists of religion were satisfied that the near-equation of religion with the historic institutional faiths was conceptually adequate. Only in our own more "secular" time has the understanding of religion become problematic -- not only for the most perceptive social theorists and theologians but also for large numbers of persons with no professional interest in religion.

Of course, the tendency to equate religion with the institutional church is itself a reflection of "secularization." Modern man sees religion not as the overarching system of order which gives meaning to the whole of life but rather as one separable -- and perhaps *dispensable* -- aspect of life. Robert N. Bellah, displaying the strong influence of Talcott Parsons, has argued that through the course of religious evolution the religious apparati became increasingly differentiated from the rest of the social order.[19] That is, religious institutions become, rather self-consciously, more distinct from the rest of society. Perhaps a part of the present crisis of redefinition flows from this: Institutional religion in the West has become so separate from the rest of society that it is becoming virtually irrelevant -- and this development is a concern of both religionists and sociologists of religion. Perhaps on the other hand, we are experiencing the beginnings of a reversal of the religious evolution which Bellah and others have described. Perhaps we are returning to a world in which meaning systems and commitment patterns are experienced as the sum total of what one knows and acts from with the result that "religion" can no longer be neatly set apart from other dimensions of one's reality.

In any case, we no longer use the word *religion* with very much security. Interestingly, Karl Barth seems to have anticipated this confusion and sought to cope with it by declaring that Christianity is not a religion.[20] In fact, Barth's treatment of this matter seems to have further confused the issue. But only with the coming of the new pluralism did the full complexity of the problem become apparent. Is Marxism a religion? Is astrology? Is love of Meher Baba? Are the self-styled clergymen of the Universal Life Church entitled to exemption from the draft? Are organized atheists in Austin, Texas, entitled to the same tax-exempt as the Presbyterians? Are adherents of the Native American Chruch entitled to "sacramental" use of the illegal psychedelic drug peyote? Can nontheistic humanists be exempted from military service on religious grounds? Is commitment to a scientific worldview an act of faith? Is

Jungian psychotherapy a religion?

Answers to questions like these matter. They matter to a variety of professionals: the attorneys and the judges who must argue and adjudicate some of the resulting disputes, the clergy and the seminary professors who train them, and the *Time* magazine editor who must decide what goes on the "Religion" page.

The definition of religion is of particular importance to the sociologist who studies religious affairs. Without a general consensus as to what is meant by the word *religion* both survey research and theorizing are hampered. The stock questionnaire item *How religious would you say you are?* becomes almost useless in a society in which the word *religion* sparks a broad spectrum of connotations.

Consider, for example, the results of survey research which I conducted in the fall of 1971. A questionnaire was administered to persons attending the annual meeting of the Society for Religion in Higher Education, an association of academics who are interested in the "values aspect" of higher education. The sample is somewhat more theologically-sophisticated than average. There were 62 respondents. In response to the question *How religious would you say you are?* more than three-fourths said they were "very religious" or "somewhat religious." Yet only about *one*-fourth gave assent to theological formulations which could be categorized as fundamentalist or neo-orthodox. In response to another question only about 40 per cent of the respondents indicated that they believe in "a God -- an active intelligence who can intervene in human affairs." The same study found that almost one-fourth of the respondents never attend church *but* that only two of these call themselves "not religious."

Of the "very religious" about one-fourth do not attend church at all.

These findings must be cautiously interpreted. The sample was quite small and almost certainly not representative of the whole population. The respondents are much better educated than the general public and the fact of their affiliation with the SRHE suggests that they think more self-consciously about "religious" questions than do most people.[21] Nevertheless, these data call into question any tendency to equate "being religious" with such widely-employed indicators as belief in God, reverence for a religious tradition, or participation in the activities of churches and synagogues.

We should not, however, leap to the conclusion that only the theologically-sophisticated raise questions about the commonsense understanding of religion nor that such concerns are only now beginning to surface. In a 1960 survey of American college students Rose Goldsen and her associates found that 80 per cent of those interviewed expressed a "need for religious faith" but only about *half* felt that "acceptance of the Deity is a highly important component of a religious or ethical system."[22] In other words, nearly one-third of the total sample could conceive of something called "religion" which would not include belief in God.

V

Peter Berger has devoted considerable attention to the problem of the definition of religion. In that connection he has written:

> Definitions cannot, by their very nature, be either "true" or "false," only more useful or less so. For this reason it makes relatively little sense to argue over definitions. If, however, there are discrepancies between definitions in a given field, it makes sense to discuss their respective utility . . . with the brevity appropriate to minor matters. (*Canopy*, 175)

As I shall argue below, I think that the question of a definition of religion is perhaps more than a minor matter but I agree that one ought to proceed by discussing the *utility* of various definitions. Even so, I suspect that we shall still feel some of the same frustration which Georg Simmel voiced nearly seventy years ago:

> Thus far, no one has been able to offer a definition which, without vagueness and yet with sufficient comprehensiveness, has told once for all what religion is in its essence, in that which is common alike to the religion of Christians and South Sea islanders, to Buddhism and Mexican idolatry. Thus far it has not been distinguished, on the one hand, from mere metaphysical speculation, nor, on the other, from the credulity which believes in "ghosts."[23]

It may clarify this definitional discussion if we give consideration to two working definitions of religion, the one less and the other more inclusive. Both of the definitions offered here have a high degree of generality and both have room for religions other than the historic traditions which come most quickly to mind in our culture. One might say, on the one hand, that *one's religion is his relationship to some separate reality which he views as ultimately significant*. This definition includes reference to some reality *other than* the empirically-available world of everyday life: the sacred, the wholly other, the supernatural, God. Following a convention now well established in the scientific study of religion, I shall call such a definition *substantive*.[24] When Berger describes religion as "the human enterprise by which a sacred cosmos is established" (*Canopy*, 25) and as "the audacious attempt to conceive of the entire universe as being humanly significant," (*Canopy*, 28) he is offering a substantive definition. Such a definition owes much to Rudolf Otto's discussion of that category he called *das Heilige*.[25] A substantive definition has a certain degree of affinity with some theological definitions of religions -- among them Karl Barth's influential discussion of Christianity-which-is-not-a-religion.

The key element in a substantive definition of religion is *otherness*;the religionist believes himself to be in touch with some supra-human reality. The "ultimacy" in such a definition points to an alleged reality beyond some cluster of man's best moments and highest hopes.

In contrast to a substantive definition, it might be argued that *one's religion is, simply, his worldview, the patterning of his most important and enduring values and commitments*. Put differently, one's religion is his *master paradigm* -- the paradigm within which everything else "makes sense." Such a definition would encompass *any* worldview -- not only those which postulated the existence of a supra-human order of reality. Such a more inclusive definition is usually referred to as *functional*.

Berger's sometime-collaborator Thomas Luckmann, for example, defines religion in terms of man's ability to transcend his biological nature by means of the social construction of universes of meaning which are comprehensive and morally-compelling. Luckmann summarizes his position thus:

> The historical priority of a world view provides the empirical basis for the "successful" transcendence of biological nature by human organisms, detaching the latter from their immediate life context and integrating them, as persons, into the context

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> of a tradition of meaning. We may conclude, therefore, that the world view, as an "objective" and historical social reality, performs an essentially religious function and define it as an *elementary social form of religion*. 26

A functional definition, then, argues that one should treat as a religion anything that functions as other things called religions did in the past. A functional definition does not necessarily refer to any suprahuman reality.

If one accepts some variation of a functional definition of religion, he must largely give up the notion of "secularization" and the way of thinking it encourages. As Luckmann has argued:

> The sociologist must ask himself instead, what is the concept underlying the symbolic reality that is now valid or is becoming valid, how has it been created, and how far is it a continuation of the Christian theme?27

Put differently, we must stop asking how the sacred is turning into the profane and begin asking what is "sacred" *for us*. The functional approach, then, soft-pedals the secularization motif and avoids the error of assuming the superiority (or inferiority) of the modern worldview.

Both the substantive and the functional approaches to religion have long and distinguished histories. Humanistic critics of religion such as Marx and Freud have focused their analyses on religion substantively understood. The functional definition has its roots in the work of Feuerbach and Durkheim but the same awareness of the issue is to be found in the theological tradition from Augustine's confession that in his youth "My error was my God" to Paul Tillich's notion of religion as ultimate concern.

I hold no brief for the continued use of the word *religion*. Indeed, at times I am tempted to believe that the only way to reduce our confusion in this connection is to "retire" the word -- as Bishop Robinson once suggested to theologians that they cease to use the equally confusing word *God*. But if we do keep the word *religion* -- and we probably shall since most neologisms don't make it -- it is my contention that we shall do well to *expand* it to include *all* of the ways that individuals and groups seek to give meaning to their lives . . . and to life itself.

It is my contention that defining religion *functionally* rather than substantively is necessary if we are to understand with adequacy the changes in value commitments which surround us. As Luckmann has written: "A functional definition of religion avoids both the customary ideological bias and the 'ethnocentric' narrowness of the substantive definition of the phenomenon."[28]

But I also share Berger's concern that we not fall into the trap of simply equating religion with the human as such (*Canopy*, 177) and so I find value in the variations of the functional definition offered by Clifford Geertz and Milton Yinger. Geertz, an anthropologist, offers this broad, flexible definition:

> Religion is a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.[29]

Yinger, who has designed survey research which proceeds from a functionalist understanding of religion, offers this definition:

> Where one finds *awareness of and interest in the continuing, recurrent, "permanent" problems of human existence* -- the human condition itself, as contrasted with specific problems; where one finds *rites and shared beliefs relevant to that awareness which define the strategy of an ultimate victory;* and where one has *groups organized to heighten that awareness and to teach and maintain those rites and beliefs* -- there you have religion.[30]

The definitions proposed by Geertz and Yinger can include Roman Catholicism, Marxism, Scientology, and secular humanism. They can even include the thoughtful individual's unique synthesis of insights from a variety of sources in several different traditions. But they do not equate the religious with the human nor do they encourage us to take religion lightly. Religious inquiry, in this view, is concerned with the study of patterns which man meets as objective realities and which have significant impact on what he sees, what he says, and what he does. Religion, thus understood, is a social fact in the Durkheimian sense. It is (at least in part) external to man and it has (at least some) coercive power over him.[31]

Peter Berger explicitly opts for and defends a substantive definition of religion, but, as I shall seek to demonstrate below, he gives considerable aid and comfort to those who prefer to define the phenomenon functionally. Indeed, at times he seems to be using methods which seem to be rooted in a functional approach. In *The Sacred Canopy* he defines religion as follows:

> the establishment, through human activity, of an all-embracing sacred order, that is, of a sacred cosmos that will be capable of maintaining itself in the ever-present face of chaos. (p. 51)

Berger desires to use the word *religion* only with reference to those exercises in meaning-making which results in the projection of a *sacred* order, of a cosmos the meaning of which both transcends and includes man.[32] Systems of order which do not posit a sacred cosmos -- such as Marxism or the human potential movement -- interest Berger but he does not think of them as religions. He has moved away from his earlier willingness to include such phenomena under the rubric "religion."[33]

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Berger, it should be noted, avoids one mistake which is common among sociologists of religion who employ a substantive definition, namely, that of equating *religion* with *religious institutions*.(*Canopy*, 177) Nevertheless, Berger's definition is more restrictive than those of, for example, Geertz, Yinger, and Luckmann.

In discussions of this matter in the chapters which follow I shall seek to demonstrate that Berger's own position on this matter is more compatible with a functional definition than he is willing to concede. Further, I shall suggest that Berger's own theological commitments inhibit his utilization of the modified functionalist position to which certain of his discoveries might otherwise have led him.

Most of the work done today in the sociology of religion is based on a substantive definition of one sort or another. Such a definition, I contend, results in methodological commitments which are now inhibiting good theoretical work in the field. The paradigm which has been dominant for the last several decades and which is still viewed as orthodox by most practitioners is obscuring our vision, making us less likely to understand important shifts om religious consciousness. This is in part a function of the fact that a substantive definition of religion takes it for granted that we know what religion is -- rather than facing up to the unsettling possibility that patterns of commitment might change so radically and so rapidly that one would be hard pressed to know just what to include in and what to exclude from the realm of the "religious."

It should be noted that when sociologists employ a substantive definition of religion, they are utilizing an understanding of the phenomenon which is quite close to the understanding held by religionists.[34]

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This should not surprise us. After all, Western religion was well-institutionalized long before sociology emerged as a self-conscious discipline. It was quite natural that sociologists might adopt the paradigm that was suggested by the self-understanding of the religions they studied. We can be grateful that certain sociological pioneers -- notably, again, Durkheim and Weber -- transcended this kind of culturally-conditioned methodology and thus laid the theoretical foundations of the field. Unfortunately most of their successors have studied religious phenomena on their own terms and so have failed to advance the discipline at the theoretical level.

VI

I have argued that the rediscovery of theory in the sociology of religion had to wait until the late 1950s and the 60s. The two world wars, the depression, and the totalitarian challenge had sent Western religion back to "business as usual" and delayed the kind of inquiry that Durkheim and Weber had called for. In such turbulent times men want their religion to be secure. When a particular religious vision is seen as that which holds us together, it seems inappropriate to tamper with it -- whether from the "inside" (hence, no radical theology) or from the "outside" (hence, no sociological theorizing that might shake up the religious consensus).

By the early 60s, however, the secular mentality -- albeit chastened by the horrors of the intervening decades -- was emerging again.

Once again -- as had been the case at least in intellectual circles in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries -- the relative monopoly exercised by the religious establishment was being challenged from within the churches and from outside them. The kind of inquiry inaugurated by Durkheim and Weber was fashionable again. Religion was a "problem" again.

Several sociologists contributed to the reformulation of the sociology of religion in the last decade and a half. Two of the most important for the purposes of this study are Thomas Luckmann and Robert Bellah -- both of whom will be referred to repeatedly in the course of this essay. Other writers -- notably Werner Stark, Guy Swanson, Thomas O'Dea, Gerhard Lenski, Andrew Greeley, Bryan Wilson, Charles Glock, and Jeffrey Hadden -- have sparked new interest in historical studies and in the integration of empirical research and sociological theory. I have chosen, however, to discuss the important changes in the field of sociology of religion by means of a careful look at the work of Peter Berger because it is my belief that his career serves as the best paradigm for understanding changes in the field and because he has treated more of the important factors in these changes -- and more extensively -- than have any of his contemporaries. I shall, then, discuss in some detail the career of Peter Berger but with the intention of offering a more general analysis of recent developments in the sociology of religion.

Quite apart from the intrinsic merit of his writings considered individually, Berger's *total career* is important to an understanding of contemporary sociology of religion because of its *paradigmatic* quality. In the changing configurations of that career the student of the sociology of religion can see some important changes in the self-understanding of the discipline that have taken place in the last fifteen years. In particular, one sees a shift from a focus on institutional religion to a focus on theistic but non-institutional religion and then to a focus on alternative master paradigms.

Peter Ludwig Berger was born in Vienna in 1929. He completed his secondary education in England and came to the United States in 1946. He majored in philosophy at Wagner College (Staten Island, New York) and graduated in 1949. He took his M.A. in sociology at the New School for Social Research in 1950 and then studied for one year at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. Unsure as to whether or not the clergy would prove to be the ideal occupational location, Berger took a leave of absence from the seminary and returned to the New School to work on a doctorate in sociology. The Ph.D. was awarded in 1954.

The New School during Berger's student years was offering essentially a European education. Nearly all of the professors were from Europe, most of them made refugees by the Nazis. Berger lists as his most influential teachers Alfred Schutz, Carl Mayer, and Albert Salomon. From Schutz Berger took his phenomonological approach and a method which involves the juxtaposition of "everyday reality" and various ecstatic categories. Mayer supplied many of the constructs Berger uses in his discussion of sectarian movements. Salomon did much of his work at the borders of sociology offering courses in the sociology department on philosophers such as Dilthey and literary figures such as Balzac.

Berger's dissertation was entitled *From Sect to Church: A Sociological Interpretation of the Baha'i Movement*. It contains treatment of

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a number of themes which have been important throughout his career. These include the definition of a sect in terms of its alleged nearness to the divine spirit, religious pluralism as a principal feature of the modern situation, and the problem of worldview maintenance within a cognitive minority. The treatment of the origins and development of the Baha'i faith provides a classic illustration of Weber's notion of the routinization of charisma.

Berger's first teaching position was a one year appointment as a lecturer in sociology at the University of Georgia. He served in the United States Army during the academic year in which he wrote his dissertation and during the year he taught at Georgia. In light of some of the things he later wrote about psychology, it is of interest to note that he worked as a psychotherapist in the Army.

The key word for describing Berger's career through this period of preparation is *busy*. In the six years following his graduation from college he did the following: earned a master's degree in sociology; completed one year of theological education; did all the work -- including the dissertation -- for the Ph.D. in sociology; served two years in the Army; and taught one year at the University of Georgia.

Berger spent the academic year 1955-56 working as the research director at the Evangelical Academy in Bad Boll, Germany. The considerable impact of this experience can be seen in his writings.[35] He returned to the United States in 1956 and served for two years as assistant professor of sociology at the Woman's College of the University of North Carolina. His experiences with the racial caste system during his three years of teaching in the south made a deep impression on him and his writings are peppered with illustrations and anecdotes having to do with racial matters -- and with impassioned pleas for racial justice.[36]

In 1958 Berger went to the Hartford Seminary Foundation where he taught social ethics and directed the Institute of Church and Community until 1963. On leave for the academic year 1961-62 he studied Old Testament at Yale.[37] Berger's first two books were written while he was at Hartford -- *The Precarious Vision* and *The Noise of Solemn Assemblies*, both published in 1961. *Vision* was written first but *Noise* was published first. The best-selling *Invitation to Sociology* was completed just before Berger left Hartford.

1963 was a pivotal year for Peter Berger. It was then that he moved from Hartford Seminary to the faculty of his alma mater, the New School, published *Invitation to Sociology* (as if to announce that he was a "real" sociologist and not merely a "religious" sociologist), and published (with Thomas Luckmann) the key article "Sociology of Religion and Sociology of Knowledge," an article which laid out Berger's "program" for the next several years.

Berger spent six very productive years at the New School; he looks back appreciatively on those years and on the stimulation that that environment gave him. Along the way he taught for one year (1966-67) at City University of New York. He was president of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, 1966-68, and editor of *Social Research*,1965-70.

It was during the New School years that Berger wrote three books which contain many of the key elements of his contribution to social theory and, in particular, to the sociology of religion -- *The Social Construction of Reality* (with Thomas Luckmann, 1966), *The Sacred Canopy* (1967), and

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A Rumor of Angels (1969). Early in this same period he edited a collection of essays on the sociology of occupations, *The Human Shape of Work* (1964) and, under the pen name "Felix Bastian," wrote a novel, *The Enclaves* (1965) which is now out of print. Toward the end of the New School period Berger co-authored (with Richard John Neuhaus) a book on contemporary American politics, *Movement and Revolution* (1969) and edited a collection of essays by eastern European sociologists, *Marxism and Sociology* (1970).

In 1970 Berger joined the faculty of the sociology department of Rutgers University. He and his wife Brigitte Berger co-authored an introductory textbook, *Sociology: A Biographical Approach* (1972). He has recently completed a book (coauthored with his wife and with Hansfried Kellner, his brother-in-law) on the experience of modernization with special attention to the Third World and to the youth culture in the West. That study will appear in 1973 under the title *The Homeless Mind*.

Peter Berger, despite his relative youth, is an appropriate focus for a study of the sociology of religion and now is a good time for such a study. Nearly a decade has passed since he laid out a sociology of religion program in the essay "Sociology of Religion and Sociology of Knowledge." He has written three books and a number of articles in this field, the last of the books, *A Rumor of Angels*, having been written over three years ago. He is presently devoting most of his energies to research and teaching outside of (or only tangentially related to) the sociology of religion as traditionally defined. To be sure, his recent interests are logical outgrowths of his earlier work. He is still working on the interrelationships between institutions and individual consciousness -- a fit preoccupation for one who has learned from George Herbert Mead and Alfred

Schutz.

Berger has no plans to return soon to the study of religion in the narrow sense of the word. He turned down a joint appointment in the sociology and religion departments at Columbia in 1970 because the University would have wanted him to focus on religion while he wanted to move on to sociology more generally considered. Because of this redirection of his energies, the time is right for a careful assessment of his work and its impact on the field of the sociology of religion. We shall also do well to try to determine the extent to which Berger's recent research interests are continuous with those of earlier phases of his career.

Berger, as many reviewers have noted, is unusual among sociologists of religion in that he admits to having a strong interest in theology. He is even willing to write about his faith commitments and ethical positions -- although he insists that these considerations must be firmly "bracketed" when he turns his attention to the sociology of religion. He is intent on keeping his two careers separate. Berger the sociologist and Berger the man of faith must operate in their separate enclaves. Indeed, the word *enclave* is one of the keys to an understanding of Berger's work. We shall do well to recall that the title of his novel is *The Enclaves* -- and to note how frequently the word appears in his writings.

I believe that for the fullest understanding of Berger's work one must challenge this "enclave mentality." Berger's career must be seen as a whole, as a *vocation*. I hope to be able to show that the imperative of challenging the compartmentalization which Berger insists upon can be supported from the man's own writings.

Notes to Chapter 1

1. This judgment is shared by many writers in the field. See, for example, Roland Robertson, ed., *Sociology of Religion* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1969), p. 12 and J. Milton Yinger, "The Present Status of the Sociology of Religion," *Journal of Religion*, 31 (July 1951), p. 194.

2. For Berger's discussion of this point see *Invitation*, p. 29 and *Sociology*, p. 15.

3. In 1971 the Gallup Poll found that 40 per cent of the adult population of the United States attends church in an average week. According to the Gallup organization churchgoing has declined more or less steadily since 1958, a peak year in attendance. In that year 49 per cent of the population attended church or synagogue in a typical week. The 1971 figure for persons 21-29 years old was only 28 per cent. These findings were reported in the *New York Times*, January 9, 1972. For further data on the religious attitudes and behavior of young people see Robert Wuthnow and Charles Y. Glock, "New Forms of Religious Consciousness Among College Youth," unpublished paper, University of California, Berkeley.

4. See, for example, Robert S. Ellwood, Jr., *Religious and Spiritual Groups in Modern America* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972).

5. In 1968 Maslow suggested to the president of the American Humanist Association that that organization should try to be a religion-surrogate, that it should try to formulate a *Weltanschauung* which could stand as an alternative to supernatural theology. Maslow wrote:

> The church has asked the important questions (and given stupid answers). Why can't we give better answers to the basic and eternal questions? What is a good man? The good life? What is right and wrong? How can we improve ourselves, make ourselves more worthy?

Maslow is quoted and this line of reasoning developed in "Toward a Humanistic Religion," a pamphlet published by the American Humanist Association, San Francisco, in 1968. See also Maslow's *Motivation and Personality*, second edition (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 169.

6. Yinger develops this position in his article "A Structural Examination of Religion," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, VIII:1 (Spring 1969), pp. 88ff.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 90.

8. Yinger (in "The Present Status of the Sociology of Religion," p. 194) has given concise expression to this concern and warned us against possible confusion as follows: "The sociology of religion is a branch of scientific sociology. It is not a marginal field between theology and sociology: religion is the datum and sociology is the method of approach."

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9. See H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Meaning of Revelation* (New York: Macmillan, 1941), chapter 1.

10. See Robert T. Bobilin (Religion Department, University of Hawaii), "Karl Mannheim's Unfinished Sociology of Religion," unpublished paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion, New York City, October 1970.

11. See Talcott Parsons, *The Social System* (New York: Free Press, 1951), chapter VIII. See also Parsons' article "Christianity and Modern Industrial Society" in Edward A. Tiryakian, ed., *Sociological Theory, Values, and Sociocultural Change* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1963). I have been aided in my understanding of Parsons' work by Jackson Toby, "Parsons' Theory of Social Evolution," *Contemporary Sociology*, 1:5 (September 1972), pp. 395ff.

12. For Berger's assessment of these developments see *Sociology*, p. 38. See also Robert W. Friedrichs, *A Sociology of Sociology* (New York: Free Press, 1970), chapters 3 and 4. For concise accounts of the development of the sociology of religion see Roland Robertson, *The Sociological Interpretation of Religion* (New York: Schocken, 1970), chapter 2 and Robert N. Bellah, *Beyond Belief* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), chapter 1.

13. Will Herberg, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1955).

14. Berger's development of this argument was published in both scholarly and popular versions. See "The Child, the Family, and the 'Religious Revival' in Suburbia" (with Dennison Nash) in *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Fall 1962, pp. 85ff. and "The Second Children's Crusade" in the *Christian Century*, December 2, 1959, pp. 1399f. For a discussion of these articles see chapter 2 of this essay. For another debunking analysis of late-50s suburban religion see Gibson Winter, *The Suburban Captivity of the Churches* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1961).

15. See note 3, above.

16. For a helpful treatment of the impact of various Eastern religions on American society see Jacob Needleman, *The New Religions* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1970).

17. Berger develops the notion of religious pluralism and utilizes the "market model" in many of his writings. See, for example, "A Market Model for the Analysis of Ecumenism," *Social Research*, XXX:1 (Spring 1963), pp. 77ff.

18. See, for example, Berger's essay "Some General Observations on the Problem of Work" in *The Human Shape of Work*. See also Jeffrey K. Hadden, "The Private Generation," *Psychology Today*, October 1969.

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19. Robert N. Bellah, "Religious Evolution," *American Sociological Review*, 29 (1964), pp. 358ff.

20. A discussion of theological definitions of religion is beyond the scope of this study but Barth's attempt to set Christianity outside of the realm of religion is of interest because of Berger's utilization of it in his first two books. Barth's position is concisely presented in his introduction to Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity* (New York: Harper and Row, 1957).

21. For the same reasons, however, these respondents should probably be thought of as "opinion leaders" whose positions on these matters will have more impact on others than will those of the average person.

22. Rose Goldsen et. al., *What College Students Think* (Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1960), pp. 153ff.

23. Georg Simmel, "A Contribution to the Sociology of Religion," *American Journal of Sociology*, November 1905, pp. 359ff.

24. For Berger's discussion of the relative utility of substantive and functional definitions of religion see *Canopy*, 175-177. See also Roland Robertson, *The Sociological Interpretation of Religion*, pp. 38ff.

25. Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1923).

26. Thomas Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), p. 53, emphasis in the original. For a discussion of the several different ways in which Luckmann uses the word *religion* see Andrew J. Weigert (University of Norte Dame), "Whose Invisible Religion? Luckmann Revisited," unpublished paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Boston, October 1972.

27. Quoted in Pieter Hendrik Vrijhof, "What is the Sociology of Religion?" in Joan Brothers, ed., *Readings in the Sociology of Religion* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1967), p. 56.

28. *The Invisible Religion*, p. 42.

29. Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System" in Donald Cutler, ed., *The Religious Situation 1968* (Boston: Beacon, 1968), p. 643

30. Yinger, "A Structural Examination of Religion," p. 91, emphasis in the original. My study of the Society for Religion in Higher Education, reported above, sought to embody Yinger's suggestions.

31. The definitions offered by Geertz and Yinger have considerable affinity with certain neo-liberal theological understandings of religion. See, for example, Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), chapter III.

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32. See Berger's essay "Religious Institutions" in Neil J. Smelser, ed., *Sociology: An Introduction* (New York: Wiley, 1967), p. 338.

33. For evidence of Berger's earlier willingness to treat secular belief systems as religions see "Sociology of Religion and Sociology of Knowledge" in Roland Robertson, ed., *Sociology of Religion* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1969), pp. 69-72.

34. Cf. Thomas Luckmann, "On Religion in Modern Society," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Spring 1963, p. 148.

35. See, for example, "Evangelical Academies in America?" in *Christianity and Crisis*, March 31, 1958, and the long section on the academy movement in *Noise*, 149ff.

36. See, for example, *Invitation*, 22f. and *Movement*, 71ff.

37. Berger's only article to be published in the *American Sociological Review* was a product of this research effort. See "Charisma and Innovation: The Social Location of Israelite Prophecy," *ASR*, December 1963.

Chapter 2 PROPHETIC SOCIOLOGY[1]

Sociological Imagination and Christian Faith

> Of two men who have no experience
> of God, he who denies Him is perhaps
> nearer to Him than the other.
>
> Simone Weil, 1947

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I. Berger at Hartford Seminary; ethics. II. The first two books; an evaluative definition of religion. III. The Precarious Vision; *its intellectual sources; bad faith and social fictions. IV. Christian faith and freedom. V.* The Noise of Solemn Assemblies; *implications for the sociology of religion. VI. Theological roots of prophetic sociology. VII. Church religion and ecumenicity. VIII. Theological education. IX. Impact and importance of Berger's early writings. X. The "dualist" posture. XI. Prophetic mantle disclaimed.*

I

In 1958 at the age of 29 Peter Berger was appointed to the faculty of the Hartford Seminary Foundation, Hartford, Connecticut, an interdenominational theological school of Congregational ancestry. He taught social ethics there until 1963 and also served as director of the Seminary's Institute of Church and Community. This institutional location required that Berger focus his energies on religion -- more particularly, on issues having to do with theology and the church -- and so required that he bracket for a time any other sociological interests he may have had. His writing during this period reflected considerable preoccupation with institutional religion. Berger wrote three books during the Hartford sojourn, two of them -- *The Precarious Vision* and *The Noise of Solemn Assemblies* -- directly concerned with church religion and offering a somewhat Kierkegaardian critique thereof. *Invitation to Sociology* was written during his last year at Hartford. During the same period Berger wrote articles in scholarly journals on sectarianism, on the American funeral, and on religion in the suburbs.[2] In more popular periodicals -- from the *Christian Century* to the *Village Voice* -- he wrote about Bonhoeffer and Camus, about the child-centered suburban family and the threat it posed to authentic Christian faith, about theological education and about Jewish jokes.[3]

Interestingly, almost nothing Berger wrote while teaching ethics at Hartford Seminary fits into the category of "ethics" as it is usually understood in a seminary curriculum. He wrote nothing about sexual decision-making or just war theory. He composed no commentaries on the works of the great ethicists of the Christian tradition. And yet, in another sense, almost *everything* he wrote during this period reflects ethical concern and carries ethical implications. Indeed, an abiding ethical concern is to be found in almost everything Berger has written from the beginning of his career to the present.

Berger's first two books probe the moral implications of church membership. They offer sweeping criticisms of institutional religion and demand that their readers confront a question no less serious than this: *Is it possible, in good faith, to take part in the corporate life of the contemporary church?*

II

Noise and *Vision* are about churches and theologies. Thus they seem at first to presuppose a substantive definition of religion. Yet there is also present in these two volumes an awareness of the social functionality of religion. Berger criticizes the churches because they have laid aside their responsibility to preach the gospel without compromise and have gone instead into the business of shoring up the social status quo, of performing integrative functions which are not part of their calling.[4]

In other words, one finds in these two books threads of *both* substantive and functional definitions of religion.

The resulting confusion can be resolved only when one realizes that the basic understanding of religion at work in these volumes is not consistent with a social scientific approach to the phenomenon. That is, although Berger's understanding of religion contains elements of both substantive and functional approaches, he does not apply either in an objective manner. Instead, his fundamental conceptual apparatus is taken from neo-orthodox theology which regards Christianity as being of divine origin and hence not a religion. "Religions" -- in this scheme of reference -- are human attempts to reach God. Christian faith, on the other hand, is understood as a product of God's initiative toward man.

In his helpful discussion of the problem of a definition of religion Milton Yinger suggests that all the different definitions one might encounter can be sorted into three categories: evaluative, substantive, and functional. Yinger discusses the scientific utility of various substantive and functional definitions but he dismisses as "inappropriate for the tasks of science" any definition which purports to tell what religion "really" or "basically" is or ought to be.[5] Berger's understanding of Christianity-which-is-not-a-religion implies an understanding of religion as somehow not including Christianity. Such a conceptualization expresses preferences, value judgments, and so is not admissable in the sociology of religion.

Vision and *Noise*, then, because of their author's dependence upon a theological definition of religion, do not make direct and substantial contributions to the sociology of religion in its theoretical dimension.

There are, however, important *implications* for theory in these books and in Berger's articles from the same period. These writings are also of interest because of what they can tell us about the religious situation of the late 50s and early 60s *and* because of what they reveal about their author at the beginning of his career.

III

Peter Berger's first book, *The Precarious Vision*, more than any other book he has written, portrays sociology as a constructive critic of institutionalized religion and as an ally of authentic Christian faith. Sociology is seen as an almost *prophetic* undertaking. Because the author's roles as objective social scientist and as committed man of faith are twisted together here in a way that will not be true in any other book he writes, *Vision* is probably the book that Berger would most like to forget.[6]

The argument of the book may be summarized as follows: The social order appears secure to most people most of the time; it is taken for granted. Certain experiences show us that it is not so secure after all. We come to see something of the precariousness of society.[7] This recognition is the necessary starting point for authentic existence. The social sciences present a picture of society as a structure of dynamic fictions. These fictions determine human actions but they also contain the possibility of freedom. The perception of society as a collection of fictions is shocking at first but upon further reflection we discover the comic aspect of these arrangements. This discovery liberates

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us. It is important to know the fictions as fictions rather than to reify them and allow them to serve as moral alibis which make it possible for us to avoid our responsibilities. Religion can be a particularly dangerous fiction, the supreme fiction that sanctifies all the others. Atheism and agnosticism may be steps to freedom because their critiques help unmask the inauthenticity of religious rationalization. The Christian faith is not a religion. Like atheism and agnosticism the Christian faith mounts a radical critique of dangerous religious fictions. Christian ethics is irrelevant unless it sees through the fictitiousness of the social structure. The Christian faith believes that the world as we know it is in the process of being redeemed; it offers a comic perspective on social existence and frees men from the bondage of deadly earnestness. Authentic Christian faith delivers men from both the dangerous fictions on which the social and political orders are based -- the burden of Egypt -- and the pretensions of institutional religion -- the burden of Zion.

Illustrative material comes in the form of fictional case histories, imaginary lost documents, and science fiction grouped together in two chapters labeled "exercises." These interludes serve to underline Berger's appreciation of the comic perspective on human affairs, a perspective which he believes is inherent in the Christian faith. The book closes with "an exegetical postscript," a powerful retelling of the prophet Nathan's censuring of the adulterous King David.

Berger's argument is dependent upon the sociological tradition of Mead and Schutz, upon existentialism, and upon neo-orthodox theology. His contribution -- as is typical of young scholars -- consists in bringing these disparate perspectives together. The resulting synthesis yields valuable insights but it also produces some problems because of the substantial tensions that exist between neo-orthodox Christianity and the secular traditions Berger taps.

From Mead Berger borrows the insight that the self is a social product, that man is irrevocably a social being. Schutz contributes an understanding of the social role as the means by which human activity is given direction and predictability. Berger also finds value in Schutz's discussion of the stranger, the marginal individual whose very existence calls into question the taken-for-granted routines of any group -- and challenges the security of the identity of the members of the group. These themes recur in Berger's work.

Like many young intellectuals at the end of the 50s Berger was deeply influenced by the existentialists and like many well-read Christians of the period he used their descriptions of the human situation in much the same way that unlettered evangelists use vivid images of the fires of hell: the existentialists were seen as having described the alienation and the terror from which Christianity alone could deliver man.[8] Although existentialist turns of phrase are found throughout the Berger corpus, it is in *Vision* that such themes are most common and most eloquently formulated. For example:

> One does not have to be an existentialist to perceive that existence lurks with terrors. Thrown into the world in one brief moment of consciousness, we are surrounded on all sides by mystery which includes our own destiny and the meaning of a universe not too obviously constructed for our comfort. From the first reassuring smile of the mother bending over a frightened infant, society provides us with structures in which we can live with a measure of ease and which announce to us every day that things are in order. Busying ourselves at the warm, well-lit spots of the marketplace we can forget the howling visions of the night. Existence is leaning over a bottomless abyss. Society is the Potemkin village that shelters the abyss from our fearful eyes.[9]

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It must be immediately added, however, that existentialism serves Berger not only by supplying images for describing the hell in which man finds himself. The existentialist perspective also helps men see their hell more clearly and thus makes it more likely that they will cope with it. Thus, the insights of existentialism are perceived as having a liberating effect and so, in Berger's view, as in the view of many liberal theologians of that period, the often anti-religious perspective of the existentialists is an *ally* of Christian faith at its best. Interestingly, there is relatively little use of existentialist themes in other sociological writing of the same period.

Of particular importance to Berger is the concept of "bad faith." Jean-Paul Sartre used the term *mauvaise foi* to describe any commitment that robs one of his autonomy or causes one to disclaim responsibility for his actions. Put differently, "bad faith" is not choosing when you might have chosen.[10] Berger develops this theme by pointing out that in modern society one of the most prevalent means of avoiding choices and the moral dilemmas they bring with them consists of hiding behind the alleged demands of certain social roles. The individual avoids taking responsibility for his actions by seeing himself as powerless to do anything other than that which is called for by the role(s) into which society has cast him. This way of thinking often issues in one form or another of the classic rationalization: "I only followed orders."

Both Sartre and Berger believe that careful analysis -- philosophical in one case, sociological in the other -- can show us that we are behaving inauthentically and challenge us to remake ourselves in accordance with a more human vision. Berger writes:

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> There is one decisive difference between the puppet theatre and the social stage. We may, indeed, be puppets of society, but with a strange, almost sinister capacity. For we can stop in our tracks, turn around and look over our shoulders -- and perceive the keys turning in our backs. This act of consciousness is the first step into freedom. That this act is a possibility is the decisive justification of the social-scientific enterprise. (*Vision*, 66)

In Berger's view, social science can help free us. Its *raison d'etre*, then, is a moral one. From this it would follow that all of us must become amateur sociologists if we are to be delivered from bad faith.

Berger's use of the word *fiction* to name those social conventions which give order to our lives has been found problematic by some readers. He clearly does not intend by this language to suggest that the "fictions" exist only in our imaginations nor that they are without power. Once constructed, the fictions, like Durkheim's "social facts," are external to the individual, objectively real, and able to control his behavior.[11] Berger is fully aware that to understand the "fictional" character of a social convention does not rob it of its power. He writes:

> The knowledge of the ugly girl that standards of beauty are culturally relative does not brighten the loneliness of Saturday night. . . . Society is fiction. The fictions murder. In these two statements we may find a paradigm of the precarious vision. (*Vision*, 16 and 20)

Berger understands that social conventions arise in response to felt human needs. He does not endorse a conspiracy theory of history; social fictions are not seen as part of a plot by means of which some people compose compelling stories and persuade others to believe them. Through much of his writing he insists that a great deal of the misery human beings have to endure is a function of the fact that we are unaware of the origins of our taken-for-granted social arrangements.[12] I would argue that Berger uses the word *fiction* in order to underline the fact that social conventions of all sorts are *human* inventions, that every taken-for-granted aspect of social reality was necessitated by human need and took shape as the result of some human initiative. His desire to label all human activity and all social arrangements as "fictional" may also be, in part, a function of his conviction that, as important as these matters are, they are less important than what God does for mankind. God's initiative is *real* for the young Peter Berger in a way that the activities of men are not.[13]

It is of interest to note in this connection that this word *fiction* which is such an important part of the vocabulary of the young Peter Berger is largely dropped from his lexicon by the end of the 60s. In time he comes to see the need to focus on man's need for order rather than on the self-conscious reconstruction of social reality.

IV

In much of what he has written Berger insists that we need roles and other social conventions in order to make sense out of life. At the same time, he is aware that roles and institutions are of human origin and that they often short-circuit moral reasoning and provide us with alibis. There seems, then, to be a need for a transcendent location from which to judge all the roles one might be called upon to play, all the institutions in which one might have to participate. For Berger -- explicitly in his earlier writings, less so in his later works -- Christian faith provides such a location. For the Peter Berger of *The Precarious Vision* Christianity at its best is not a socially-conditioned phenomenon.

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His position is quite Barthian.

> The Christian faith is not a religion in the sense of our analysis. The Christian faith is closer to the antireligious critique than to religion. In fact, the Christian faith provides a radical antireligious critique of its own. (*Vision*, 162)

Christian faith is seen as being somehow immune to the secular critique of religion. Berger sees Christianity as providing the Archimedean point from which to assess humanly-constructed reality. In a *Christian Century* article from this same period he wrote:

> There is no secure position from which we can look out over the world and be safe. There is no ground for us to stand on except Jesus Christ, the Christ of the Cross and the Resurrection.[14]

For Sartre, of course, there is no such transcendent location. He would see Berger's commitment to the Christian faith as an example of bad faith.

Berger, it should be noted, deviates from strict neo-orthodoxy in that he sees sociology as another means by which liberating transcendence can be obtained. He summarizes the relationship between social science and Christian faith as follows:

> The natural inclinations of man lead him to take society for granted, to identify himself fully with the social roles assigned to him, and to develop ideologies which will organize and dispose of any doubts that might possibly arise. There is an instructive affinity between Christian faith and the analytic enterprise of the social sciences in that both serve to disturb this happy state of affairs. The Christian faith, in its prophetic mission, confronts man with a truth of such force that the precarious pretensions of his social existence disintegrate before it. The debunking effect of social-scientific analysis is far from contradictory to this prophetic mission. Indeed, it might be called its profane auxiliary. The smashing of idols, with whatever hammers, is the underside of prophecy. (*Vision*, 204)

This very illuminating quotation reveals the strong affinity Berger sees between social science and prophetic faith. At about the time he left Hartford Seminary Berger made it clear to the religious community

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that he did not want to be thought of as a prophet [15] but he would, I suspect, admit to being an iconoclast and in this statement he calls the smashing of idols the underside of prophecy, its profane auxiliary.

According to Berger one of the principal ways in which Christian faith liberates men from bad faith is by means of its comic perspective on life. He writes:

> Tragedy accepts the walls of the prison and perceives the human situation in terms of this acceptance. Comedy gives the impression that the walls too are not as grim as they look. Tragedy is perception of the human situation only under the aspect of immanence. Comedy is a signal, an imtimation, of transcendence. It is here that its Christian significance is to be found.[16]

The Christian faith, in Berger's view, remembers -- even when all other perspectives forget -- that every human enterprise, every social construct is incomplete and, thus, not worthy of being taken wholly seriously. For Berger as for Bonhoeffer, everything in this world is penultimate. Such a perspective guarantees that one will not take too seriously the things of this world. Some political implications of this position will be developed in chapter 7.

It should be noted here that Berger later moves away from the position that Christian faith is somehow immune to the forms of criticism that relativize other religions. In an appendix to *The Sacred Canopy* he writes:

> I have in previous writings made statements about the relationship between sociological and theological perspectives that I no longer regard as tenable (particularly in my book *The Precarious Vision*, 1961), and I have the perhaps slightly old-fashioned notion that one ought to correct in print what one has previously said in print and no longer holds to. (pp. 179f.)

Of the neo-orthodox contention that Christianity is not a religion Berger at this later time writes:

> This differentiation, and the consequences drawn from it, now seem quite inadmissable to me. The *same* analytical tools (of historical scholarship, of sociology, and so on) can be applied to "religion" and to "faith." Indeed, in any empirical discipline the "Christian faith" is simply another case of the phenomenon of "religion." (pp. 183f.)

As we shall see in chapter 4, this rejection of the Barthian distinction between "religion" and "faith" was a necessary step on the way to the more sophisticated sociology of religion which Berger produced in the mid 60s. The theological implications of this shift will be discussed in chapter 5.

V

The Noise of Solemn Assemblies, published in 1961, was written on commission for the National Student Christian Federation to be a study book for college students. It sold very well,[17] was reviewed -- mostly appreciatively -- in large numbers of religious periodicals, and drew quite a bit of attention to its thirty-two year old author. Although the book is sometimes used in sociology of religion classes, the bulk of the sales seem to have been to theological students, ministers, Christian college students, members of church study groups, and the like.

A German edition of the book, *Kirsche Ohne Auftrag*,[18] appeared a year later and elicited numerous reviews in the German religious press. The German reviewers were a little less kind than their American counterparts but still the overall tone was positive. The Germans were a bit more prone to see Berger as a threat to the well being of the churches. Because the churches in the United States at that time were encouraging,

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even reveling in quite a bit of self-criticism, Berger was viewed by most of his American readers as a constructive voice.[19]

Noise begins with the familiar words of the Old Testament prophet Amos:

> I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and cereal offerings, I will not accept them, and the peace offerings of your fatted beasts I will not look upon. Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream. (Amos 5:21-24, RSV)

In one sense the book may be understood as an extended exegesis of this prophetic denunciation of the established religion of another time and place.

In a brief "Preface on Commitment" Berger identifies himself as a Christian but he also insists that "relentless intellectual honesty is . . . part of the Christian mission." (p. 14) Thus, he is prepared to turn the tools of his specialty, sociology, upon the religious community of which he is part in the full confidence that God will be vindicated. In this he likens himself to those nineteenth century Protestant Biblical scholars who were "the first in religious history to subject their own writings to a merciless scrutiny." (p. 16) Here, then, Berger manifests his conviction that sociology, like authentic prophetic insight, can highlight the failings of institutionalized religion and motivate reform. Specifically, he tells us, sociological analysis reveals that church religion in America is securely established; it is taken for granted. And yet, the churches are irrelevant in terms of the revolutionary forces that are remaking society. Churches, Berger argues, do not generate values. Rather, they sanction -- and sanctify -- the values prevalent in our society. The churches underwrite the status quo and in return receive financial support in the form of tax exemptions and other privileges. Clergymen pray at inaugurations, at executions, and on the battlefields thus lending the church's legitimacy -- almost uncritically -- to the established political order. American religion is further described as "psychologically functional;" it helps the religionist "fit in" to society as it is.

These descriptions of the churches and their place in American society, Berger claims, are value-free. With those descriptions made, however, the author is ready to "engage his values" and offer some suggestions as to what ought to be done. The last third of the book is entitled "The Task of Disestablishment." Here Berger again insists that church religion is not the same thing as Christian faith. In addition, he offers the churches these suggestions for self-improvement: The first priority is personal conversion to faith in Jesus Christ. There is needed more emphasis on theology, the self-understanding of the Christian community, and less on churchmanship. Berger calls upon his readers to devote themselves to the grave social problems of the day with a "levelheaded kind of enthusiasm." He closes with the assertion that the living out of one's faith might well require the severing of one's relationship with the church.

It was this final conclusion that earned the young Peter Berger the enmity of some churchmen and the applause of many liberal and radical reformers in the churches -- and which set *Noise* apart from much of the church-renewal literature of the period.[20] Christian commitment, said Berger, may necessitate ending one's relationship with institutional religion. In this assertion we can see in shadowy form two concerns pertinent to the sociology of religion which have been present in all of Berger's writings on religion. (1) Religion is not coextensive with religious institutions. This discovery points toward the necessity of developing a sociology of religion which takes into consideration religious phenomena other than the church and the theologies they generate, the rituals they celebrate, and the ethics they promulgate. Put differently, the discovery that there is a religious reality outside of the churches is a small but important step toward the construction of a sociology of religion that is more than a sociology of the churches -- even if that discovery is tied to conservative theological commitments and even if it is expressed in the distracting language that insists that Christianity is not a religion.

(2) The second concern consists in Berger's insistence that religion ought to be defined in terms of an alleged connection with a nonhuman reality, that is, with the supernatural.[21] This stands in some tension with the first concern in that it implies that "secular" paradigms -- that is, those which do not posit the existence of a sacred cosmos -- ought not be thought of as religions. Both of these concerns will be discussed further below, especially in chapter 4.

VI

There is value in noting that Berger describes the churches as *established*, as part of the *establishment*. For many of his readers -- especially his younger readers -- the perjorative use of these words and his caustic criticism of the churches seemed to indicate that Berger was quite radical. But it is important that we read Berger's critique of church religion in context. Neo-orthodoxy was the dominant theology of the day. Barthian Protestantism always sees the church as a human institution, quite fallible, always in need of correction from the Word (Jesus Christ as revealed in Scripture). This means that criticism of the church is legitimated by the tradition but always with the understanding that the critic is bringing the Word to bear on the church. He does not criticize the church on the basis of his own subjective impressions and preferences.

Berger's commentary on church religion ought to be understood in this light. The critique originates within the tradition itself, not merely in the mind of one who is disgruntled. And sociological insight, which Berger had elsewhere called prophecy's profane auxiliary, is helpful in demonstrating just how far the churches stand from the ideal laid down for them in scripture and tradition.

Consistent with his theological commitments of that time, Berger chastised the churches for taking part in a hollow "culture religion." This made him appear radically anti-church to some of his readers. It caused others to see him as a prophetic figure who was telling the churches what they needed to hear.

Berger's critique of church religion tends to be rather one-sided. In his fervor -- which some saw as bordering on self-righteousness -- he seems to have overlooked some important elements of the American religious situation of the period. He does not acknowledge that social order is desirable and that the churches' contributions to that order

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might be an important -- albeit perhaps "profane" -- function. Later, in *The Sacred Canopy*, he discusses with some degree of objectivity the importance of the integrating value of church religion and in an article in the *Christian Century* in 1968 he confessed that he had changed his mind on this matter: Churches ought to take seriously the task of helping to assure the maintenance of that minimal order without which human life cannot continue. This is necessitated, in Berger's view, by important changes in the nature of the social order in the years since *Noise* was published.[22] Thus an angry young Peter Berger who resents the social functionality of church religion becomes a middle-aged Peter Berger who very much appreciates that functionality.

There is another important point at which Berger seems to have overstated his case. In *Noise* he insists that institutional religion in America takes no initiative; it merely reflects the values of the culture of which it is part. In his enthusiasm Berger seems to overlook the possibility that the churches might sometimes themselves be the sources of cultural values. He writes:

> The religious institution does not . . . generate its own values; instead it ratifies and sanctifies the values prevalent in the general community. There is little if any difference between the values propagated by the religious institution and those of any secular institution of equivalent status in the community (such as the school). . . . What distinguishes the handling of these values in the churches is mainly the heavier dosage of religious vocabulary involved. . . . The church members hold the same values as everybody else, but with more emphatic solemnity. (*Noise*, 40f.)

This formulation may be criticized from the perspective of Berger's own theoretical and methodological commitments. Throughout his career he has argued that the relationship between religious institutions and the larger society is dialectical. Even in his dissertation he had insisted that the sociology of religion should not be concerned with the reduction of religious phenomena to a set of socio-economic determinants. Rather, he argues: "The relationship between religious groups and wider social institutions is one of reciprocity and interaction, not of one-sided determination in either direction."(p. 146) But despite this commitment, in *Noise* Berger seems to see causation flowing in only one direction. Angry partisanship -- or perhaps the power of his own rhetoric -- led him away from an appreciation of the dialectical relationship between the religious group and "the world." He seems to completely overlook the possibility that the churches might contribute to the social ethic.

One cannot help but wonder whether Berger's theological commitments might not be playing a part. Perhaps the neo-orthodox stress on the divine initiative as the sole source of truth and virtue makes one less apt to see the churches, human institutions that they are, as agencies able to generate values.

VII

The period during which Berger wrote his first two books was marked by relatively high church membership and attendance, by the construction of many new houses of worship, especially in the suburbs, and by an acceleration of ecumenical cooperation. Berger -- together with other writers such as Will Herberg, Martin Marty, and Gibson Winter[23] -- was concerned to use sociological inquiry and historical scholarship to demonstrate that the surface successes of institutional religion were not indicative of any genuine spiritual advance. In fact, these men ar-

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gued, those "successes" are a facade which hides the spiritual shallowness of the religious community. The churches were gaining the world and losing their soul. In several important articles from this period Berger analyzed various dimensions of the alleged religious "boom."

In the 1962 article "The Child, the Family, and the 'Religious Revival' in Suburbia"[24] Berger (and co-author Dennison Nash) report the results of interviews with suburbanites who had recently affiliated with churches. This research, like Berger's first two books, was church-centered but, again, the aim was to get behind the statistics and attempt a *qualitative* analysis of the alleged revival. In 32 of 35 cases, Berger and Nash found, joining the church

> was prompted by consideration for some other person(s). In 31 cases it was a gesture of solidarity within a . . . family. In 25 cases it was the prospect or the presence of children which wholly or partly occasioned the act of joining by their parents. (p. 89)

The interviewees seemed to take it for granted that children should go to church -- mostly for the sake of their moral education -- and that parents should also affiliate for the sake of family solidarity.

> Most of the parents see nothing wrong with a superficial or even hypocritical involvement with organized religion, if it is conceived to benefit the children. (p. 90)

No substantial number of joiners appear to have been responding to a life crisis. Conversion experiences were almost non-existent in this sample. Rather, the researchers report,

> Joining, for most of these people, appears to be an ordinary, to-be-counted-on occurrence -- a rite of passage -- in the unfolding of their family life. (p. 93)

The rise in church membership and attendance, in Berger's view, should not be interpreted as evidence of a religious revival. Rather,

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the church boom is best understood as a response to the discovery of the "private sphere" which is part of the legacy of the industrialization of Western society. The advancing division of labor creates a situation in which fewer and fewer people can find meaning in their public or professional selves. They turn, therefore, to the private sphere to search for meaning and for their identities.[25] The churches thrive, in Berger's view, because they offer a location for family activities and because the clergy offer their services as pastoral counselors committed to the unlocking of the power of positive thinking.

Once again, in Berger's view, sociological analysis has made manifest the pretensions of established religion. The article, which appeared in a professional journal, flew the flag of value-free inquiry. There is, however, little doubt but that Berger was unhappy with what he had learned about suburban religion. The normative conclusion was omitted from this scholarly article as inappropriate. *But* -- note well -- nearly three years *before* the appearance of "The Child, the Family, and the 'Religious Revival' in Suburbia" Berger wrote an article for the *Christian Century* entitled "The Second Children's Crusade" the thesis of which (as stated in bold type just below the title) was this: "Overemphasis on the family in suburbia's churches is basically subversive of the Christian mission."[26] One cannot help but ask whether or not Berger might have already had a conclusion in mind before he began his field research.

In another scholarly article from this period Berger elaborated a debunking analysis of the ecumenical movement -- a development which was even more sacrosanct in the eyes of churchmen and religious journalists than the religious revival in the suburbs. The essay appeared in 1963 and was entitled "A Market Model for the Analysis of Ecumenicity."[27] From the title forward one knew that this treatment would not accord the ecumenical movement much reverence. Berger argues that the apparent paradox of increased interdenominational cooperation going hand-in-hand with an observed resurgence of denominational awareness is best explained by the recognition that the denominations are essentially economic units which are engaging in competition within a free market. Since unrestricted competition is impractical and expensive, Berger concludes, the churches -- following the lead of big business -- resort to cartelization. Thus the new church-hungry suburbs are divided up among the various denominations. The Methodists "get the franchise" for Broadmoor in return for which they agree to leave Forest Glen to the Presbyterians. Meanwhile, ecclesiastical mergers steadily reduce the number of competing units. The "new denominationalism," the much-heralded rediscovery of the traditions, is seen as being analogous to what marketing specialists call marginal differentiation, that is, presenting a standardized product in a number of apparently different forms so that everyone feels that what he has bought is distinctive. A key element in this argument is the importance of the pluralism which marks the American religious situation. Pluralism means that religion can no longer be imposed. Rather, Berger insists, it must be marketed -- to consumers who are growing more critical, more skeptical, and more given to syncretisms of every sort.[28]

Such an analysis, Berger insists, in no way questions the sincerity of the churchmen involved. His portrayal, however, shows the church as an efficient bureaucracy and, indirectly, invites the reader to reassess the ecumenical revolution in which liberal churchmen of that period placed such high hopes.

Interestingly, the same Peter Berger who in 1963 can find no good thing to say about the ecumenical movement was a featured speaker at the Tenth Plenary of the Consultation on Church Union in 1971. There he spoke kind words about COCU and even gave voice to "the rather unfashionable opinion that there are occasions when bureaucratic organizations may be vehicles of grace."[29] As in the case of culture religion, social realities have shown Berger the need for structures for which he once had only critical words.

VIII

We have seen, then, that in his first two books and in the articles on suburban religion and on the ecumenical movement Berger again and again accused the churches of being without sound theological foundation and without authentic spiritual depth. Yet the same Peter Berger who was the author of these caustic commentaries was in the employ of a religious institution supported by money raised from among churchmen. Some of his readers found themselves wondering if this might not be a case of having your cake and eating it too while simultaneously biting the hand that feeds you.[30] Harvey Cox -- then in the employ of the American Baptist Convention -- wrote to Berger in the fall of 1961 to say that he had found value in *The Noise of Solemn Assemblies*. He also had a challenge for Berger. Cox wrote:

> I'd like to come down . . . to Hartford and have a leisurely talk with you. . . . I'll be interested in discovering why your pessimistic evaluation of the local church does not apply in some measure to the whole enterprise of theological education.[31]

But theological education was not exempted from Berger's critique of American Protestantism. In an article in *Theology Today* in 1962[32] Berger argued that most theological education was defective because it was aimed at producing organization men rather than theological scholars. He calls for a return to a focus on the traditional theological disciplines -- Biblical studies, history, and theology -- and for an end to the fashionable flirtation with the new disciplines which purport to make the ministry "relevant."[33] Interest in these "practical" disciplines -- especially pastoral psychology -- Berger sees as a reflection of an "underlying uncertainty about the role of the ministry in our contemporary situation." (p. 183) He concludes:

> If the Protestant minister is to be a theological scholar, then his education must concentrate on furthering theological scholarship. A shoemaker should know how to mend shoes. If he can do that well, we can enjoy it if he can also advise us on marital problems and has an opinion on Tennessee Williams. But the latter accomplishments are adiaphoral. (p. 187)

Berger's concerns were made available to a wider audience by means of a report on the *Theology Today* article in *Time* magazine.[34]

Toward the end of his tour of duty at Hartford Seminary Berger served on a committee charged with the construction of a new theological curriculum. He reported on the new course of study in the *Christian Century* in the spring of 1963.[35] Hartford Seminary, Berger announced, would return to a focus on the classical theological disciplines and would relegate "practical" studies to two four-week spring terms which would follow upon the conclusions of the first and second years of theological education. Work in what the new curriculum called the "cultural area" -- included here are philosophy, sociology, and psychology -- was understood as part of the minister's preparation for his *apologetic* task. (pp. 526f.)

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This emphasis is of interest in light of Berger's oft-repeated conviction that in order to hold a particular worldview one must be able to defend it against rival worldviews.

Berger was well aware of the fact that he and his colleagues were choosing a direction other than the one that then seemed most attractive to the majority of those engaged in theological education in main-line Protestantism. He wrote:

> We are quite conscious that in several ways we are going against what has been the trend in this country. All we can affirm is that we have done these things deliberately, thoughtfully, and with prayer. (p. 527)

Two months after the appearance of this article reporting on the Seminary's new curriculum, Berger moved from Hartford to his new position at the New School for Social Research -- there to devote himself to secular scholarship and to the study of religion from the perspective of something other than the classical theological disciplines. Within a year or two of Berger's departure the Seminary moved back toward a curriculum marked by less emphasis on the classical disciplines and more attention to philosophical inquiry, cultural analysis, and "practical" skills.

IX

As a result of the publication of his first two books Peter Berger had considerable impact on the religious community -- but very little on the sociological establishment. He was especially well-received among seminarians and college students. In its "Pen-ultimate" column (March 27, 1963) the *Christian Century* reported:

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> In most campus chapels, right after the Epistle and the Gospel, a text from Peter Berger is read to provide the basis for the morning's meditation. Berger and his writings are very, very popular among Christians of a coming generation. (p. 415)

That column -- entitled "Peter Berger's Attack upon Christendom" -- was but one of many which employed the image of the prophet to describe Berger. *Time* magazine labeled him a "Connecticut Kierkegaard." In a review of *Noise* Waldo Beach called him "an authentic Amos for suburbia." A Southern Baptist reviewer judged Berger "a perceptive, uninhibited, prophetic spirit within the Christian movement."[36]

To be sure, a few reviewers felt that Berger had gone too far, that he had dealt too harshly with the church. Interestingly, these reservations were voiced as often by Protestant liberals as by the more conservative from whom such critical responses might have been expected. Robert McAfee Brown, for example, felt that Berger had bracketed his faith too well and for too long and that he was giving aid and comfort to the cynical drop-outs from the church -- to those very people whose properly invested energies would be needed if there was to be genuine renewal. Other liberal respondents, among them Scott Paradise and Robert Lee, felt that Berger had overlooked the church's capacity to be its own critic.[37] These reservations notwithstanding, the overall response of the religious community seems to have been: "Thanks. We needed that."

In retrospect, then, we can see that Berger's first two books were important as part of a movement within American Christianity but that they were of limited importance to the sociology of religion. As John Wilson has written:

> When compared with his later work, much of Berger's writings on the religious revival of the 1950s appears simplistic and unduly restricted by being confined to a specific framework of religious belief.[38]

The Peter Berger of *Vision* and *Noise* was writing a kind of religious sociology. His analysis was not value-free; it was performed in the service of a particular vision of how things ought to be. These books were the work of a committed Christian who had seriously considered the ministry as a life work and who was in the employ of a theological seminary. Had Berger continued to write books of this sort, he would have made few contributions to the reconstruction of the sociology of religion.

Despite these reservations about the lasting significance of Berger's first two books it is important to appreciate them as a stage in the career of their author. Concerns are voiced in these volumes which later prove to be of genuine importance in Berger's later theoretical work. Items placed on the agenda in *Vision* and *Noise* and in the articles discussed above are taken up in later writings. And in the denunciation of church religion, in the harsh criticism of the impotence and irrelevance of the local congregations, Berger takes a first small step toward the rediscovery of macro-level theory in the sociology of religion.

In his first two books Berger (like his allies Herberg and Marty) introduced *qual*itative as opposed to *quan*titative analysis of the religious situation. Survey research was reporting that the churches were doing very well in terms of membership figures and church attendance. Berger insisted that from a sociological perspective grounded in the work of Max Weber one might probe for the *meaning* behind those statistics. When he did this he concluded that things were not as they appeared. The quantitative approach to the sociology of religion continued into the

60s and 70s -- though with fewer successes and more failures to report for institutional religion in America. Meanwhile Berger, moving in a direction telegraphed in the first two books, developed a sociology of religion which seeks to understand, to explain, changing patterns of religious commitment.

X

It is very hard to keep qualitative analysis of values and ultimate concerns value-free. The entire Berger corpus -- and the writings of such sociologists as Thomas O'Dea and Robert Bellah -- poses this difficult question for the sociology of religion: Is it possible to go "beyond" mere description and data-gathering without slipping off into making value judgments?

A concern to separate description from prescription, explanation from advocacy, social science from religion and ethics, is a persistent theme in Berger's writings. He believes that in his professional writings a sociologist ought only describe. Normative statements are appropriate only in non-scholarly writings. But, as I shall argue throughout, Berger's attempts to bracket his values are not always successful and his division of his writings into "scholarly" and "non-scholarly" seems at times quite arbitrary.[39]

Quite apart from his unconcealed wish that the churches might recover an authentic Christian faith, Berger gives away another preference in *Vision* and *Noise*. This preference, this value, is to be found not only in the early writings but in Berger's later works as well -- even though his faith commitments are much more firmly bracketed in the later writings. I refer to his fundamental hostility toward "the world," his antagonism toward culture regardless of the content of that culture.

This tendency is on display in Berger's exegesis of Matthew 10:16 in the preface to *Noise*. In that passage Jesus exhorts his followers to be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Berger's focus is on the word *innocence*. He writes:

> "Innocence" is the upholding against all odds of the faith in God's love. And this "innocence," as the Greek word suggests, is "unmixed." It resists the constant temptation to "mix" this message of God's love with the messages of the world. If this is a correct interpretation, then our time is urgently in need of it, because we live in a period of intensive "mixing" (what scholars of religion have sometimes called "syncretism"). (p. 13)

Berger here seems to adopt a stance which H. Richard Niebuhr has described in terms of seeing Christ and culture in paradox.[40] This dualist position, Niebuhr argues, receives classical expression in the Lutheran doctrine of the two kingdoms.[41] Luther wrote:

> There are two kingdoms, one the kingdom of God, the other the kingdom of the world. . . . God's kingdom is a kingdom of grace and mercy . . . but the kingdom of the world is a kingdom of wrath and severity.[42]

Niebuhr summarizes the dualist position thus:

> On the one side are we with all of our activities, our states and our churches, our pagan and our Christian works; on the other side is God in Christ. . . . Godlessness manifests itself in irreligion, in atheism and antitheism; but also in the piety of those who self-consciously carry God around with them wherever they go.[43]

It is important to note that the dualist position sees institutional religion as part of "culture," as a human work which is incomplete and in need of divine redemption. Berger is clearly part of this tradition when he is critical of the church, when he insists in his early works that

Christian faith can deliver us from both the perversions of secular power and the pretensions of institutional religion.

The dualist posture, Niebuhr notes, can lead to political quietism and conservatism. This potential discussed by Anton C. Zijderveld in his helpful treatment of the social implications of Luther's thought in *The Abstract Society*. He writes:

> Luther's *homo internus* [spiritual man] is essentially free from social responsibility. He is responsible to God alone, but when the God concept is secularized he will easily become self-centered and ego-directed. Responsibility is then left to *homo externus* [socially-conditioned man] and bears the stigma of inauthenticity and alienation which easily result in abdication of responsibility.[44]

Further political implications of the dualist stance will be explored in chapter 7.

In the present context Niebuhr's delineation of the dualist posture will help us better to understand not only Berger's Christianity-is-not-a-religion position (from which he moves away in his later writings) but also his passion to keep sociological and theological inquiry forever separate.[45]

Most sociologists, by virtue of their commitments to value-free inquiry, are concerned that their research findings not be contaminated by the value commitments which are influential in non-empirical disciplines such as theology. Berger, as one who follows Max Weber, is clearly concerned that social inquiry not be hampered by faith commitments and prejudices. But, in addition, Berger -- because of his own Christian commitments -- is also concerned that the Christian faith not be contaminated by contact with secular perspectives. In other words, the commitments of Christianity of the dualist sort and of value-free social science have

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an elective affinity for one another. They seek one another out and reinforce one another.[46] Both perspectives -- each for its own reasons -- insists on the separation of sociology and theology.

In fairness it must be noted that Berger has self-consciously abandoned many of the positions he takes in *Vision* and *Noise*. Nevertheless, it seems clear to me that the "man of faith" part of Berger still holds to the dualist perspective. Consider these excerpts from the address to the Consultation on Church Union in the fall of 1971:

> The Christian community must not identify itself fully with *any* sociocultural context. . . . Christianity always stands over and beyond any particular culture, and . . . this transcendence involves judgment as well as grace. . . . Could it not be that "modern consciousness," far from being the pinnacle of man's cognitive history, may rather be the result of impoverishment in man's grasp of reality? . . . Put simply: Ages of faith are not marked by "dialogue," but by *proclamation*. . . . What the church has to say, in any age, is always *essentially* the same.[47]

Finally, then, Berger's "radical" critique of the church is discovered to be part of a rather conservative and essentially Lutheran theological commitment. The church -- like the political order, the school system, and the media -- is an imperfect human form which seeks to provide and orderly environment in which men can hear and respond to God's initiative. Berger is most upset by the fact that the churches seem to have lost sight of the great distance that separates that divine initiative from all human endeavor. He writes:

> The Christian faith will always be in tension with the world. What is characteristic of our situation is that the religious establishment itself obscures this tension and produces the illusion that what tension there is can be understood as growing pains. (*Noise*, 118)

One of the last things Peter Berger wrote before he left Hartford Seminary was a response to the *Christian Century* column in which he had been compared with the prophet Amos. His letter was published in the May 15, 1963 issue under the title "Prophetic Mantle Disclaimed." In it Berger calls into question the appropriateness of the label "prophet" for himself of for any other contemporary individual. The letter is very serious in tone. It says, in part:

> A prophet is a man through whom God speaks. That is one of the most awesome fates that could befall a human being, and it is usually accompanied by great suffering. Not surprisingly, most of the prophets appearing in the Bible strenuously resisted this vocation. They finally accepted it because they could no longer resist God. This is not only awesome. It is humanly terrible. . . . If one understands this, he will not use these terms lightly. Perhaps one can still use the term "prophetic" in speaking of the church. But one ought to eschew it meticulously when writing, in any context whatever, of one's contemporaries. . . . I regret that I chose a phrase from Amos as the title of one of my books. I did so because I thought that Amos has something to say to our present situation, not because I had the temerity to think of my own writing as a "prophetic" activity -- a thought that would be at the same time blasphemous and asinine.

In the same letter Berger reports that he is not completely happy with the kinds of responses his writings have elicited. On the campus circuit, he reports,

> I shock my audiences, because I fail to meet their expectations of being able to enjoy vicariously someone else's frantic yelling. I don't yell, and I'm determined to frustrate any hopes for prefabricated messianism.

Berger could have almost certainly enjoyed a long and profitable career as a constructive critic of church religion. Many of his readers seem to have expected from him more revelations of bad faith and accomodationism in the churches. Some even hoped that he would lead a kind of cleansing of the temple. But this Berger was not prepared to do.

In an address delivered in 1966 Berger voiced a certain admiration for Karl Marx:

> When he was certain that, with Feuerbach, the critique of religion was finished, he did not bother himself with it any more, but went on to concern himself with other things.[48]

So also Berger, convinced that the critique of church religion had been well-formulated and having himself contributed two scathing volumes to that critique, turned his attention to other things. The literature of the sociology of religion is richer because he resisted any temptation he might have felt to grind out a book a year on the lamentable estate of institutional religion.

Notes to Chapter 2

1. My use of the term *prophetic sociology* includes most of the meanings implicit in Robert Friedrichs' use of the term in his book *A Sociology of Sociology* and includes, in addition, the notion of a self-conscious effort to be a constructive critic of institutional religion.

2. "Sectarianism and Religious Sociation," *American Journal of Sociology*, July 1958, pp. 41ff.; "Kulturelle Wertstruktur und Bestattungspraktiken in den Vereinigten Staaten," *Koelner Zeitschrift fur Soziogie und Sozialpsychologie*, July 1960 (English version: "Value Aspects of American Funeral Practices," *New Wine*, March 1964); "Church Commitment in an American Suburb," *Archives de Sociologie des Religions*, January-June 1962.

3. "Camus, Bonhoeffer and the World Come of Age," *Christian Century*, April 8 and 15, 1959; "The Second Children's Crusade," *Christian Century*, December 2, 1959; "Religious Establishment and Theological Education," *Theology Today*, July 1962; "The Best Jokes are Jewish -- A Christian Footnote," *Village Voice*, June 1, 1960.

4. For a discussion of the elements of a functional understanding of religion in Berger's early work see John Wilson, "The De-alienation of Peter Berger," *Soundings*, LII:4 (Winter 1969), pp. 425ff.

5. J. Milton Yinger, *The Scientific Study of Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1970), pp. 4ff.

6. Some indication of Berger's later embarrassment with his first two books may be found by means of an examination of the mutations through which the subtitles of the two volumes have passed. The subtitle of *The Precarious Vision* is this: *A Sociologist Looks at Social Fictions and Christian Faith* (suggesting, we may note, that Christian faith is not a social fiction.) In a vita prepared in 1970 Berger listed the full subtitles of all except his first two books. Instead of the original subtitle of *Vision*, he offered, in parentheses, this brief description: "A discussion of the ethical implications of sociological thought." Similarly the vita omits the original subtitle of *The Noise of Solemn Assemblies*, namely,*Christian Commitment and the Religious Establishment in America*, and instead describes the book as "A sociological analysis of American Protestantism." In both cases subtitles which suggested considerable concern with the Christian faith were dropped in favor of descriptions more compatible with the commitments of value-free inquiry.

7. The precariousness of the social order is an important theme throughout Berger's career. It is a central element of *Invitation*. Perhaps his most eloquent expression of this motif is to be found in his novel *The Enclaves*. There he writes:

> Culture is all too precariously superimposed on nature. . . . Culture comes to be commonly perceived as a sort of montage, here today, perhaps gone tomorrow. . . . The well-authenticated Hungarian affinity for the orgy (*mulatság*) in all its forms must be understood as an expression of precisely this montage-consciousness, an almost instinctive awareness of the transitoriness and tenuousness of all human order. (pp. 3f.)

8. See, for example, J. Rodman Williams, *Contemporary Existentialism and Christian Faith* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965).

9. *Vision*, 97. For another powerful example of Berger's use of existentialist imagery see *Invitation*, 145-150. The image of the mother comforting her child recurs in *Rumor*, 54ff., in a discussion of order as a signal of transcendence.

10. Sartre's discussions of bad faith are to be found in *Being and Nothinness* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), pp. 47ff. and in the essay "Existentialism is a Humanism" in Walter Kaufmann, ed., *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre* (Cleveland: World, 1956), pp. 287ff.

11. Cf. Emile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method* (New York: Free Press, 1964), especially chapter I. See also Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, chapter II.

12. Elsewhere in his writings, however, Berger acknowledges that social institutions might collapse if their human origins and their failures were too widely apprehended.

13. Interestingly this same separation of God's initiative from all human endeavor is also to be found in the writings of one of the fore-fathers of the sociology of knowledge, Giambattista Vico. Cf. *The New Science* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1961), XXIV:167, *passim*.

14. "Camus, Bonhoeffer, and the World Come of Age," *Christian Century*, April 15, 1959, 451f. This article is important because it displays Berger's conviction that Camus' antireligious critique and Bonhoeffer's Christianity-is-not-a-religion approach both vindicate Christian faith.

15. See "Prophetic Mantle Disclaimed," *Christian Century*, May 15, 1963. See also my discussion of this, pp. 70ff.

16. *Vision*, 212. The concept of "signals of transcendence" remains important for Berger long after he has abandoned some of the positions he takes in *Vision*. For his treatment of the theological implications of the comic motif see *Rumor*, pp. 69ff.

17. *Noise* sold over 50,000 copies.

18. Stuttgart: Kreuz, 1962.

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19. This self-mortification of the American churches continued into the mid-60s and made best sellers of such books as Harvey Cox, *The Secular City* (New York: Macmillan, 1965) and Pierre Berton, *The Comfortable Pew* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1965).

20. For example, Martin Marty had written in *The New Shape of American Religion* (New York: Harper and Row, 1959): "We already possess the institutions we need to undertake the religious task set before America today." (p. 122)

21. In his dissertation (unpublished, New School for Social Research, 1954) and in an article, "Charisma and Innovation: The Social Location of Israelite Prophecy," Berger argues that a sect may be distinguished from a church by virtue of the fact that the former claims to be closer to the "spirit." Supernatural power is available to the faithful on demand. No elaborate hierarchy shields the believer from encounter with God. In contrast, nearly no one in the main-line Protestant churches claims to have experiences of the supernatural. (See *Noise*, 45) This contrast is important in terms of Berger's later insistence that we should use the label *religion* only in reference to worldviews which posit the existence of a sacred cosmos, that is, a supernatural order.

22. "Between Tyranny and Chaos," *Christian Century*, October 30, 1968, pp. 1369f.

23. See Will Herberg, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1955); Martin Marty, *The New Shape of American Religion* (New York: Harper and Row, 1959); and Gibson Winter, *The Suburban Captivity of the Churches* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1961). It would perhaps not be unfair to suggest that there is little in *Noise* which is not also to be found elsewhere in this anti-church corpus. Indeed, Berger is directly dependent upon the Herberg volume at a number of points.

24. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Fall 1962, pp. 85ff.

25. See Berger's essay "Some General Observations on the Problem of Work" in *The Human Shape of Work*. Berger's use of the concepts "public and private sphere" will be discussed in chapter 3 of this study.

26. "The Second Children's Crusade," *Christian Century*, December 2, 1959, p. 1399.

27. The article was published in *Social Research*, XXX:1 (1963), pp. 77ff. For other helpful analyses of the ecumenical movement see Robert Lee, *The Social Sources of Church Unity* (New York: Abingdon, 1960) and Bryan R. Wilson, *Religion in Secular Society* (London: C. A. Watts, 1966).

28. For Berger's earlier use of the market metaphor see his dissertation, pp. 182f. and the article "The Sociological Study of Sectarianism," *Social Research*, Winter 1954, p. 481.

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29. "A Call for Authority in the Christian Community," *Christian Century*, October 27, 1971, p. 1263. For further discussion see chapter 7 of this study.

30. In his article "Charisma and Innovation" Berger combined sociological analysis and recent Old Testament scholarship and concluded that it is incorrect to see the Israelite prophets as isolated individuals opposed to the established religion of the priests. Rather, the prophets were closely related to certain cultic offices. One cannot help but wonder whether perhaps Berger saw an implicit "defense" of his own institutional attachment here. He writes: "Putting the prophet on an institutional payroll does not seem to have offered effective protection against his coming out with unheard-of radicalisms." (p. 949)

31. The letter, dated October 26, 1961, was made available to me by Peter Berger who was kind enough to give me access to correspondence received in response to his several books.

32. "Religious Establishment and Theological Education," *Theology Today*, July 1962, pp. 178ff.

33. Berger makes it clear that he teaches one of the "new disciplines" and so "can at least claim that his position is not motivated by special interest!" (p. 187) Such a disclaimer in the context of this article suggests that Berger's by-then-imminent departure from his tenured post at Hartford might have been motivated by the belief that the seminarians needed more Bible and theology and less sociology and ethics. Berger names as the principal reason for his move his desire to have graduate students of his own, students for whom his subject matter would be a central concern.

34. "Theologians Wanted," *Time*, July 20, 1962, p. 52.

35. "Toward a More Scholarly Ministry," *Christian Century*, April 24, 1963, pp. 524ff.

36. See *Time*, July 20, 1962, p. 52; Beach in *Westminster Bookman*, March 1962, p. 25; and *The Outlook* of the Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, October 1962.

37. See Robert McAfee Brown, "Two Books by Berger: An Assembly of Solemn Noises," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, XVII:4 (May 1962), pp. 333ff.; Scott Paradise, personal correspondence to Peter Berger, November 27, 1961; and Robert Lee, "Study Guide on the Life and Mission of the Church in the United States," a pamphlet prepared by the National Student Christian Federation, no date.

38. John Wilson, "The De-alienation of Peter Berger," p. 425.

39. For a discussion of some of the ethical implications of *Invitation* and *Work*, see below, chapter 3.

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40. H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper and Row, 1951), chapter 5.

41. For my understanding of the social and political implications of Luther's thought I am indebted to Sheldon S. Wolin, *Politics and Vision* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1960), chapter 5.

42. Quoted in Niebuhr, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

43. *Op. cit.*, 150 and 154.

44. Anton C. Zijderveld, *The Abstract Society* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1970), p. 15.

45. One finds this same strong dualism in the work of Helmut Schelsky, a contemporary German sociologist who has influenced Berger. See his article "Can Continual Reflection be Institutionalized?" *Cross Currents*, XV:2 (Spring 1965), pp. 171ff. For discussion of Schelsky's work see P. H. Vrijhof, "What is Sociology of Religion?" in Joan Brothers, ed., *Readings in the Sociology of Religion*, pp. 34 and 51.

46. The Weberian concept of elective affinity is a favorite of Berger's. He makes considerable use of it in his teaching and writing. Cf. *Sociology*, 343.

47. See "A Call for Authority in the Christian Community," *Christian Century*, October 27, 1971, pp. 1258f. and 1262, emphases in the original.

48. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Spring 1967, p. 16.

Chapter 3 SECULAR SOCIOLOGY

Sociology as a Form of Consciousness

> Man's most ingenious invention is man. To create others we must first imagine ourselves. To keep us from wandering or wondering, in some other direction where a greater truth may lie, we set up all sorts of roadblocks and traffic signals.
>
> Sean O'Faolain

I. Invitation to Sociology; *Its reception. II. Humanistic sociology. III. The sociological perspective. IV. Ethical implications of sociological thought. V. The malleability of human nature; Gehlen. VI. Roles. VII.* The Human Shape of Work. *VIII. The private sphere. IX.* Verstehen, *value-freedom, and dialectic.*

I

The years 1963 to 1966 were an important transitional time for Peter Berger, a time during which old and new ways of thinking clashed, a time marked by his attempt to establish his reputation as a serious secular social scientist and by his fruitful collaboration with Thomas Luckmann.[1] I shall explore the "secularization" of Berger's career in this chapter by focusing on two books, *Invitation to Sociology*, 1963, and *The Human Shape of Work* (edited by Berger), 1964 -- and by discussing some of the methodological commitments which underlie them. The collaboration with Luckmann and the phase of Berger's career which it ushered in will be explored in chapter 4.

Although Berger wrote *Invitation to Sociology* while he was still teaching at Hartford Seminary, the book should be understood as part of the new "secular" career he began to carve out for himself in 1963. It is in many ways a pivotal book. The existentialist themes are still there as is the strong desire that the sociological perspective be appreciated for its ability to deliver men from "bad faith." Overt religious commitment is absent -- although Philip Selznick, in a review in the *American Sociological Review*, insists that an "unspoken theological premise" is at work in the book.[2] Perhaps sociologists *expected* a religious book from the author of *Vision* and *Noise*.

Berger seems to have done a better job of convincing churchmen that he was no longer working in their precincts than of convincing the established sociologists that he was one of them.[3]

In one sense *Invitation* appeared to be a clean break with Berger's past. Unlike *Vision* and *Noise*, this book was reviewed in major professional journals. But these reviews were not very enthusiastic. Don Martindale, writing in the *American Journal of Sociology*, described *Invitation* as a kind of mediator between C. Wright Mills (in *The Sociological Imagination*) and Edward Shils (in his article "The Calling of Sociology"). This reviewer calls the book "witty" and "urbane" and yet one feels that, in Martindale's view, Berger has opted for a middle position that will please no one. The review closes with this verdict: "Humanistic sociology, it would appear, can perhaps best be described as faint-hearted ethics."[4]

Philip Selznick's review in the *American Sociological Review* was even less appreciative. He admits that there is much that is "penetrating and sensitive" in the book but his overall judgment of Berger's attempt to interpret sociology to the general reader is harsh:

> . . . he has offered a caricature, or at best a highly parochial view. More important, it is a view that is in some respects profoundly misguided and scientifically regressive. . . . the book is so badly flawed that I could not recommend it (certainly not to someone unacquainted with sociology!) without the following cautions: . . .[5]

Selznick then goes on to fault Berger for the suggestion that sociology presents a rigidly deterministic image of man and for a "deplorable lack of balance" (too much emphasis on debunking, inability to appreciate the *positive* aspects of socialization, etc.). Selznick, like Martindale closes with an expression of dissatisfaction with Berger's understanding of

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humanistic sociology:

> The outstanding impression Berger leaves his reader is that sociology properly speaks in the accents of alienation and teaches that redemption is found when a man is in society but not of it. There is a religious conclusion latent here, and one that I respect. But I am sorry to see the study of man thus cruelly mocked in the interests of an uspoken theological premise.

Despite such criticisms, *Invitation* has been widely adopted as an introductory book in sociology[6] -- perhaps simply because it succeeds in arousing student interest where there was none. This is precisely the point at which many less-opinionated introductions fail.

Invitation is important to the present study because it reveals something of Berger's understanding of the field. When he selects that which he would like others to know *first*, perhaps he tells us which aspects of the field he considers most important. In this connection there is value in comparing *Invitation* with *Sociology: A Biographical Approach* which Berger co-authored with his wife Brigitte in 1972. *Invitation* is much more opinionated, even sectarian. It had a message, namely that sociological imagination can free us. *Sociology* is much more conventional. It aims at being comprehensive -- and fair to all schools. It has no strong thesis. Its subtle messages are simply that (1) the relationship between institutions and individual consciousness is dialectical and (2) values are of fundamental importance in the life of any society.[7]

II

In *Invitation* Berger presents sociology as a form of consciousness, a way of looking at things. He does not underestimate the importance of

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scientific procedures in sociology and throughout his writings he understands sociological theory as an empirical discipline.[8] Yet one key to grasping Berger's work is to be found in the fact that he sees sociology as part of the humanities. Indeed, the subtitle of *Invitation to Sociology* is *A Humanistic Perspective*.

In *Invitation* and in his other books Berger insists that sociology has considerable affinity with history and philosophy. In their introductory text Peter and Brigitte Berger describe their point of view as "humanistic." (*Sociology*, vii)

Of course, the humanistic understanding of the discipline did not originate with Berger. It was "in the air" at the end of the 1950s. In 1959 C. Wright Mills published his very influential *The Sociological Imagination*. Berger quoted Mills with approval in *The Precarious Vision* (p. 13) but, as we shall see in chapter 7 of this study, he came later to feel that he must dissociate himself from the "radical sociology" to which Mills gave impetus.

Another call for a humanistic sociology came in the form of Robert Bierstedt's presidential address before the Eastern Sociological Society in the same year. By the then-dominant standards of the discipline, Bierstedt argued, men like Veblen, Sumner, and de Tocqueville would be judged unacceptable as doctoral candidates. Sociology, Bierstedt insisted, ought to be understood as a bridge between the sciences and the humanities.[9]

Robert Nisbet, another voice in the chorus calling for a humanistic sociology, called attention to the fact that in Europe science did not become the "bloodless empirical system" it became in the United States. He wrote:

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> In Europe, where the humanistic tradition was stronger as the result of a much older pre-democratic, pre-industrial past, and where a mind of the stature of Faraday's could reject for himself the title of physicist, preferring that of philosopher, and be understood and honored for it, there was less likelihood of science becoming mired in unrelieved method and technique.[10]

Berger's understanding of "science," a function of his Continental origins and his New School education, is quite European. *Wissenschaft* is the name given by Europeans to any systematic cognitive endeavor. Berger eschews the Anglo-American tendency to understand "science" only in terms of quantitative analysis.[11]

But despite the legitimacy of its pedigree, Berger's position made him feel a little out of place among English-speaking sociologists and led him, from time to time, to offer some rather harsh judgments of his profession. In *Invitation* he writes:

> The sensible person reads the sociological journals mainly for the book reviews and the obituaries and goes to sociological meetings only if he is looking for a job or has other intrigues to carry on. (p. 11)

The criticisms of sociology as it is practiced by his contemporaries which are sprinkled throughout the Berger corpus give evidence that he remained an iconoclast even after he stopped writing "prophetic" religious sociology. He wrote critically about churches while in the employ of a theological seminary. Later he wrote critically about the sociological establishment while in the employ of secular institutions -- and despite his desire to be accepted in that community of scholars. But in both cases he based his critique on some fundamental "essence" which underlay the institutional expressions. He criticized the churches in the name of Christian faith, that empirically-unavailable reality to which the prophets and Jesus gave expression. He criticized institutionalized and computerized sociology in the name of the sociological imagination best personified by such as Weber, Veblen, and Schutz. If there was a Christianity-which-is-not-a-religion for the author of *Vision* and *Noise*, there was also a Sociology-which-is-not-survey-research for the author of *Invitation to Sociology*. Berger, then, continued a kind of "prophetic" vocation even though he no longer espoused the Christian faith in his professional writings.

III

Berger's vision of sociology -- as expressed in *Invitation* and later in *The Social Construction of Reality* and in the recent introductory text -- begins with the pretheoretical experiences of everyday life and then gradually makes its way out into the problematic areas of social and personal existence. It is important to note that for Berger sociological inquiry does not begin with existing institutions: he is concerned, rather, to understand those fundamental human needs in response to which institutions are devised.

This starting point Berger takes from Alfred Schutz but whereas Schutz devoted most of his energy to careful discription of the commonplace, the routine, Berger has chosen to focus on the experiences of discrepancy and the remedial actions men take in order to make things hang together. If Schutz treated the taken-for-granted world with a kind of reverence and examined the minutiae by means of which it is maintained, Berger has chosen instead to underline the precariousness of the social order and to examine the ways in which men tamper -- consciously and unconsciously -- with that social order.[12]

This shift of emphasis should be understood as one manifestation of a larger development in sociology in the 60s. Some students and teachers of sociology were becoming uncomfortable with the secure "system" image which was dominating the discipline. The social, cultural, and political turbulence of the 60s seemed to demand that those who were professionally concerned with the science of society talk less about the stability of the system and more about the ways in which the system was changing and could be changed. This concern to take a more serious look at social change and conflict manifested itself in the revolt against Parsonian hegemony but Berger's variations on the themes of Schutz may be understood as part of the same movement. By remembering what was going on in sociology in the early 60s and by remembering some of the ways in which the whole society was changing then, we can better understand why Berger chose as the organizing motifs of *Invitation* the following qualities of the sociological perspective: *debunking*, *unrespectability*, *relativizing*, and *cosmopolitanism*. And we can better understand the reservations some sociologists voiced concerning those choices.

By *debunking* Berger means the search for hidden meanings and motivations, for the latent functions of any set of human arrangements. Such a peek behind the scenes almost inevitably undermines the official rationales and betrays the precariousness of all social structures. The sociologist, then, is fundamentally suspicious of all orthodoxies. As Berger puts it: "The first wisdom of sociology is this -- Things are not what they seem." (*Invitation*, 23)

It was this debunking motif in Berger's early work that caused some of the younger "radical" sociologists to see him as an ally. The affinity may be seen in this line from the introduction of *Sociology on Trial*, an anthology of critical perspectives on sociology which was published in 1963: "Analysis exposes the glue that holds the joints of society together and it forces people to view themselves within what is at best a fairly precarious social order."[13]

To do his job, Berger insists, the sociologist must be willing to go poking around in out-of-the-way places; he must ask embarrassing questions. Given the standards of middle-class propriety, his is an *unrespectable* calling. Berger discusses with obvious fondness the careers of Thorstein Veblen (whose "biography itself constitutes an exercise in marginality") and of those sociologists of the Chicago School who took the advice of Robert Park and "got their hands dirty with research" by doing field studies among the deviant and the outcasts of the society. All social scientists, in Berger's view, are "professional Peeping Toms."[14]

Such explorations inevitably have a *relativizing* effect. They make one aware of the fluidity of values and remind one that definitions of "truth" are quite independent upon the social context in which such definitions are attempted. Berger is fond of quoting Pascal's dictum that what is truth on one side of the Pyrenees is error on the other. Indeed, Berger names the relativizing motif as one of the "fundamental driving forces of the sociological enterprise." (*Invitation*, 52) Like Nietzsche, Scheler, and Mannheim before him, Berger searches for some sort of deliverance from the vortex of relativism which seems to swallow up the possibility of ever being sure of anything. In the face of such epistem-

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ological insecurity one is unable to defend any moral choice and the specter of nihilism looms large. Much of Berger's intellectual labor may be understood as a search for the touchstones which make social order and sanity possible despite the vertigo of relativity. *What holds us together? What holds me together?*

A partial antidote to relativity is to be found in the willingness to open oneself to a wide variety of experiences and influences. Thus, Berger insists, sociology must renounce all parochialisms and be the critic of every ideology. The sociologist qua sociologist must remain uncommitted despite all his willingness to listen empathetically to every set of affirmations he encounters. His must be, in short, a *cosmopolitan* mind set. It is interesting to note that although Berger can develop a theoretical stance rooted in the sociology of knowledge with scant attention to the work of Karl Mannheim, he finds some value in Mannheim's notion of the "detached intellectual" who experiences everything but who gives himself to nothing. This is, of course, but another way of expressing the desirability of being in this world but not of it.[15]

IV

In *Invitation* as in *The Precarious Vision* it is in the discovery of the precariousness of every human arrangement that Berger finds the possibility of freedom. As we face the apparent givenness of various institutional forms and role expectations, sociology helps us see these realities as human products which are not nearly as secure as the appear. Seen in this new light, relativized by our discoveries about them, these

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forms lose some of their power to coerce us.

There is a strong reformist implication here. Berger believes that if we could see things more clearly, we might be able to correct some of the unfortunate aspects of our social existence. He displays this same concern in the 1965 article "Reification and the Sociological Critique of Consciousness":

> However much alienation may modify the results of our world-producing, the fact remains that it is we ourselves who are continuing to produce this world. . . . this fact already indicates at least the theoretical possibility of reversing the alienating moment.[16]

Insofar as Marx encourages this sort of unmasking, he is seen as an ally. Insofar as they attempt to construct alternate ideologies, the Marxists are the enemy.

At times Berger seems to be saying that the sociologist *alone* sees things as they are.[17] He knows that sociologists have their blind spots but he clearly believes that there is something about the discipline of sociology that gives it great potential for peeking behind the facades and seeing things more clearly. This theme runs all through *Invitation* but it is also to be found in the earlier *The Precarious Vision*. There Berger writes:

> The scholarly cloak of the social scientist is anything but a safe protection against the hazards of ideological befuddlement. Nevertheless . . . the social sciences . . . provide some intellectual tools with the help of which a fairly viable observation tower *may* be constructed. (*Vision*, 64)

But Berger also realizes that the same sociological insight which can free us can be redirected and used in the service of ignorance and oppression. He writes:

> There is an ethically sinister possibility in knowing the machinery of the rules. . . . Every sociologist is a potential saboteur or swindler, as well as a putative helpmate of oppression. (*Invitation*, 152)

Good criminology, Berger reminds us, is equally valuable to both the police and the Mafia. It should not surprise us that totalitarian governments seek to suppress independent sociological inquiry nor that our own government employs sociologists in programs such and the now much discredited Project Camelot. Knowledge is power and knowledge of what holds society together, as Machiavelli and Hobbes knew all too well, is power of the most basic sort.

Berger, then, is forced to admit that to know the truth about the social order or some portion thereof does not guarantee that that knowledge will be put to good use. Bad faith can afflict even the sociologist. Berger writes:

> As the physicists are busy engineering the world's annhilation, the social scientists can be entrusted with the smaller mission of engineering the world's assent. (*Invitation*, 152)

And in an article in a popular periodical from this same period he offers this gloomy picture of his morally ambiguous profession:

> The sociologist who teaches finds himself typically in a situation where career considerations far outdistance any concern for scientific truth -- among his students, his colleagues, and, all too often, in his own mind. The sociologist who engages in research typically discovers that his findings are utilized for ends he recoils from or at best is indifferent to -- for better salesmanship, maybe, or for the better waging to total war.[18]

Sociological imagination, as understood by Berger, teaches us to be wary of any commitments and it can deliver us from the fanaticism which is unfreedom. The appropriate answer to the question, "Whose side are you on?", no matter who asks it, ought to be, in Berger's view, *"Not yours,*

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Mac!" (*Movement*, 20) Anticipating his later political writings Berger observes:

> Sociological understanding leads to a considerable measure of disenchantment. The disenchanted man is a poor risk for both conservative and revolutionary movements; for the former because he does not possess the requisite amount of credulity in the ideologies of the *status quo*, for the latter because he will be skeptical about the utopian myths that invariably form the nurture of revolutionaries. (*Invitation*, 162)

But such disenchantment, Berger insists, need not necessarily lead to cynicism nor to membership in that "masochistic cult of debunkers who reassure each other that things could not possibly be worse." Rather, he concludes, there is another option, one which

> we regard as the most plausible one to result from sociological understanding, one that can combine compassion, limited commitment and a sense of the comic in man's social carnival. . . . If one views society as a comedy, one will not hesitate to cheat, especially if by cheating one can alleviate a little pain here or make life a little brighter there. One will refuse to take seriously the rules of the game, except insofar as these rules protect real human beings and foster real human values. (*Invitation*, 163)

Here again, as in *Vision*, we are offered salvation -- though dressed this time in humanistic and existential rather than Christian garments. Sociology is portrayed in the service of ecstasy, the imaginative transcendence of the humanly constructed world.

V

A central motif in Berger's sociological theory is *the malleability of human nature* and of the social world, a theme present with more or less urgency in most sociological writing. His development of this theme supplies him with a way of coming to terms with the determinism which he

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believes to be implicit in the sociological perspective and, coincidentally, provides him with a point of contact with the "radical" sociologists.

The key to the development of the malleability motif is to be found in Berger's use of Arnold Gehlen's theory of institutions. Gehlen is a contemporary German social scientist and philosopher who has been influential in the renascence of sociology in Germany since World War II.[19] Gehlen has attempted to relate sociological theory to biology and has been influenced by Konrad Lorenz and other students of animal behavior.

Berger, following Gehlen, defines *institution* quite broadly as "a distinctive complex of social actions." (*Invitation*, 87) In other words, any pattern of human arrangements, any distinctive, recurring improvisation which men impose on the "natural state" should be thought of as an institution. The word should not be restricted to naming only highly visible buildings and bureaucracies. The Defense Department and the San Diego Zoo are institutions but so are our courtship patterns, party etiquette, and language.[20] Berger, more than many sociologists, is not content merely to name and describe institutions. Beyond that, he is concerned to talk about the ways in which institutions relate to the actions of the individuals whose lives they touch. It is in this connection that he makes such fruitful use of Gehlen.

Gehlen begins with the biological fact that human beings -- and in this we are unique in the animal world -- are born "unfinished." The skull of the newborn infant is incomplete; it does not yet fully surround the brain. It is as though he was born too soon. He is quite helpless at birth and he remains so for years. More than that, he is instinctually-

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incomplete: he does not have the built-in guidance system which the lower animals have. The human being must be *taught* many survival skills which the lower animals are born with. As a result, man is free in a way that the lower animals are not. In the words of the Indian sorcerer don Juan:

> A hunter that is worth his salt does not catch game because he sets his traps, or because he knows the routines of his prey, but because he himself has no routines. This is his advantage. He is not at all like the animals he is after, fixed by heavy routines and predictable quirks. He is free, fluid, unpredictable.[21]

In Gehlen's view human institutions -- again, in the broadest sense of the word -- are the means by which we compensate for our instinctual-incompleteness. Institutions channel human actions in much the same way as instincts channel animal behavior. Institutions reduce the number of options open to the individual from the infinite to the manageable and when institutions do their job "well" the individual is scarcely aware that the other options exist at all. [22]

Such a reduction of the number of options helps assure that society will cohere by making the behavior of others predictable (note the affinity with Mead) *and* protects the individual from madness by providing sta- "locations" within his personal consciousness. Gretel Weiss summarizes as follows:

> Man's inner consciousness is not in a constant state of flux, but certain areas take on as definite a form as the objectivized external world. These areas act as centers of gravity, as guideposts, as coordinators, and as inhibitors, and they have the capacity to organize and stabilize other less firmly fixed areas. In a sense they are institutions of the mind.[23]

A dialectical understanding of the relationship between social institutions and individual consciousness is at work here.

This line of reasoning leads to the conclusion that there is no such thing as a biologically-given "human nature." That is, there is no particular way of being in the world that inevitably accompanies being born a member of our species. The culture into which the individual is born, the socializing experiences he undergoes, will in large measure determine what kind of person he will be. Our biological-givenness draws some very wide boundaries and human institutions -- and choices along the way -- determine how we shall function and what we shall be within those boundaries. The range of behaviors open to the lower animals is very narrow; that available to human beings is almost infinitely wide. Berger summarizes as follows:

> Humanness is socio-culturally variable. In other words, there is no human nature in the sense of a biologically fixed substratum determining the variability of socio-cultural formations. There is only human nature in the sense of anthropological constants (for example, world-openness and plasticity of instinctual structure) that delimit and permit man's socio-cultural formations. But the specific shape into which this humanness is molded is determined by those socio-cultural formations and is relative to their numerous variations. While it is possible to say that man has a nature, it is more significant to say that man constructs his own nature, or more simply, that man produces himself. (*Construction*, 49)

But such freedom is not without its drawbacks. "Unfinished man" may find himself without direction in a world of too many options. Such is the plight of Ulrich, the protagonist in Robert Musil's novel *The Man Without Qualities*. Ulrich has no fixed traits, no life plan, no obsessions. Lacking a firm character structure, he is completely open to every new possibility *but* he is quite incapable of committing himself to anyone or anything. Berger has called *The Man Without Qualities* the greatest novel of the twentieth century and has written a long interpretive essay about it.[24]

Berger, then, builds a view of man -- an anthropology -- upon Gehlen's insights, a view pregnant with possibilities which one might fairly call theological. Gehlen's notion of unfinished man has high affinity with the Christian notion of *choice having been given to man*. Christian theology in its various mutations teaches that although there exists a God who is in control of the world, he has not determined everything. As a result, man is in most ways free -- and because he is free, he is responsible for his choices, for his behavior. We are, then, different from the other animals in our being less thoroughly determined by God (in the Christian formulation) or by nature (in Gehlen's formulation). What is important is that no matter which formulation one prefers, the effect is the same. Namely: One comes to see man as somehow partially transcending the natural order. dependent upon the human creation of meaning, relatively free from coercion and therefore responsible for his world. As William James has written:

> In our cognitive as well as in our active life we are creative. We *add*, both to the subject and to the predicate part of reality. The world stands really malleable, waiting to receive its final touches at our hands. Like the kingdom of heaven, it suffers human violence willingly. Man engenders truth upon it.[25]

VI

Faced with more options than he can handle, finding his freedom to be a burden at times, the individual craves direction, simplification, a reduction of the total number of options. One of the most important ways in which men give focus and meaning to their lives is by means of *roles*. Berger defines a role as "a typified response to a typified expectation"

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(*Invitation*, 95) but again (as in *Vision*) it is the image of the theatre which he uses to fill out this definition. The particular social order into which one is born offers him various roles which he might play. He chooses -- often quite unselfconsciously -- the ones which, taken together, will constitute his personality and he is provided with the appropriate scripts. He is entitled to a certain freedom to improvise but for the most part he is expected to manifest a range of behavior called for by the role.[26]

Role theory, as Berger develops it, is an extension of the Meadian approach in a broader frame of reference, namely one that includes a theory of institutions in the Durkheimian sense. Indeed, it would be fair to say that Berger understands roles as institutions in microcosm. Further, their proper performance has implications for the stable continuity of larger social arrangements. (*Sociology*, 69) If one plays his role as "scripted," he necessarily supports the institution of which the role is part. But the role not only reaches "out" to macro-social structures; it also reaches "in" to the moods and motivations of the individual actor. Berger puts it this way:

> One feels more ardent by kissing, more humble by kneeling and more angry by shaking one's fist. That is, the kiss not only expresses ardor but manufactures it. Roles carry with them both certain actions and the emotions and attitudes that belong to these actions. The professor putting on an act that pretends to wisdom comes to feel wise. The preacher finds himself believing what he preaches. . . . Each role has its inner discipline, what Catholic monastics would call its "formation." The role forms, shapes, patterns both action and actor. It is very difficult to pretend in this world. Normally, one becomes what one plays at. (*Invitation*, 96 and 98)

Novelist Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. has reached the same conclusion: "We are what we pretend to be, so we must be very careful about what we pretend to be."[27]

Berger (with Luckmann) gives further expression to his understanding of roles in *The Social Construction of Reality*. In that book roles are seen as the point of contact between the individual and the institutions which give order to social life. The relationship is summed up as follows: "By playing roles, the individual participates in a social world. By internalizing these roles, the same world becomes objectively real to him."(*Construction*, 69)

It would be difficult to overestimate the importance of role theory in Berger's work. Without a strong sense of role, human activity would be hopelessly random and the species would probably not survive. Further, Berger is very suspicious of any effort -- such as one sees in various approaches to psychology -- to get "behind" or "beyond" roles in a search for an alleged "real self." He regards as misguided the contemporary concern to "integrate," to be the same in every situation. And yet, as has been noted above, one finds in Berger's writings the constant insistence that we must not allow ourselves to become trapped in our roles. Roles, in Berger's view, can "liberate" us by giving us a stable background against which to experiment, against which to experience that which is novel. But roles -- as Berger reminds us again and again -- can also be prisions and alibis. Roles can become reified; their human origins and humane purposes can be forgotten. What then happens, says Berger, is this:

> No one exists any longer, but roles interact in a sort of ectoplasmic exchange. The thief does not steal but is playing the role of thief, the judge does not judge but is playing the role of judge, and (last but not least) the criminologist does not understand either the thief's stealing or the judge's judging but is playing the role of the social scientist.[28]

Roles, then, can become detached from human intentionality and expressivity; they become in Berger's words "inevitable destinies for their bearers." That is, those who play social roles come to believe that they have no choice but to play those roles. For Berger, sociology can help people see that roles are social constructs and so can free them from the inevitability they attach to the roles. As Marshall McLuhan has written: "There is absolutely no inevitability as long as there is a willingness to contemplate what is happening."[29]

Perhaps Berger is suggesting that the taking of a role could be an imaginative exercise by means of which the individual comes to see himself -- or some part of himself -- more clearly. Playing one role can help us see through some of the inhumane demands of other roles. *And*, Berger reminds us, when one self-consciously adopts a role, he makes the demands of that role a part of the "program" by means of which his life is shaped. One chooses one's gods by choosing one's playmates.

VII

Berger sees those roles which reflect the division of labor in society as being among the most important means by which we give meaning to human life. An individual's occupational role may be taken as one of the most important indices of "who he is." In *The Precarious Vision* Berger had written: "Occupation gives the readiest index for social identification. . . . Occupation involves not only roles but also ideology." (p. 59)

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The emotional roots of our attitudes toward work run deep. Man by his very nature wants to change his environment; he wants to see things move because he has acted. Schutz, it should be noted, considered "work" the archetypal image of human reality.[30] We should not be surprised to discover that for Berger work has a "profound religious significance." He writes:

> If to work means to build a world, then it entails, in a religious perspective, a repetition or imitation of the divine acts by which the world was originally built -- and perhaps even a competition with these divine acts, as the myth of Prometheus suggests. To work is no light matter. To work is to mime creation itself. (*Work*, 212)

Berger's principal contribution to a sociological understanding of work is *The Human Shape of Work: Studies in the Sociology of Occupations*, a volume of essays which he edited in 1964. The book does not claim to be a comprehensive sociology of work. Indeed, perhaps the sociology of occupations is to the sociology of work as the sociology of churches is to the sociology of religion. The volume is very well integrated. The essays on the various occupations -- their hierarchical arrangement underscoring Berger's on-going interest in social class[31]-- are important to Berger's task of theorizing and not merely as individual essays. Berger ties the several contributions together by means of a closing essay in which he develops some theoretical considerations of rather broad application.

The general testimony of the several essayists is that work in our society is alienating and anxiety-producing. At the bottom of the occupational hierarchy we find the apartment house janitor. He does not really understand what is expected of him; he cannot communicate with his ten-

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ants; urban life is generally unpleasant. The auto worker is bored; his natural rhythms must be subordinated to those of the assembly line; he is not even free to urinate when he wants to. The technician is almost "schizophrenic"; he does not know if he is a "worker" or a "professional." The advertising man is portrayed -- by a *former* advertising man -- as a semi-creative moral chameleon peddling his "talents" to the highest bidder. The work world of the corporation president is described as meaningful in an essay by Kenneth Underwood but Berger registers his doubts about this. (*Work*, 218 and 235)

With these portraits before the reader, Berger is ready to offer his theoretical statement. Work, he argues, has become a "problem" because (1) most people still subscribe to the notion that one's work ought to be "meaningful" but (2) the demands of our industrial system are such that most jobs are boring, repetitive, segmented, and unfulfilling. Put simply: We still *expect* to find fulfillment in our work, but we don't.

In modern industrial society, Berger argues, there are three types of work:

> First, there is work that still provides an occasion for primary self-identification and self-commitment. . . . *Thirdly*, there is work that is apprehended as a direct threat to self-identification, an indignity, an oppression. And secondly, between these two poles, is work that is *neither* fulfillment *nor* oppression, a sort of gray, neutral region in which one neither rejoices nor suffers, but with which one puts up with more or less grace for the sake of other things that are supposed to be important -- these other things being typically connected with one's private life. . . . For better or for worse (and, by most possible criteria, probably for better), the first and the third category have shrunk in favor of the second. . . . At the same time that the demand for masters shrinks, so does the demand for slaves. (*Work*, 218f.)

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Berger portrays the whole occupational structure as being full of role-playing, absurdity, self-deception, and awkward attempts at self-legitimation. In summary:

> The occupational world, perceived as the arena of all these conflicting and cacophonous claims to importance, finally takes on the character of a fantastic carnival, a Mad Hatter's party, a human comedy. And we would submit that only this perception will do full justice to it, even sociologically. (*Work*, 238)

Berger's essay in *The Human Shape of Work* reflects his conviction that one must look at *both* economic forces (in this case, industrialization) *and* ideological shifts (in this case, the secularization of the concept of vocation) in order to explain important social changes. Needless to say, one sees the influence of Max Weber in this conviction.

VIII

Berger's conclusions about the ways in which work is changing in our society are themselves prelude to a further theoretical formulation, one which is pressed into service at many points in his writings. When work is devalued by the routinization which modern industry and commerce demand, Berger argues, it can no longer give "meaning" to the lives of individuals. One's "public life," those activities given shape by his occupation, is seen as unsatisfactory and so in compensation he turns his attention to the "private sphere," that aspect of his life which occurs away from the world of work.[32]

The individual whose life is over-directed by the routines of production and bureaucracy turns to himself, to his home life and leisure, and to a personalized version of the quest for meaning. One result of

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this development is the emergence of what Gehlen calls *secondary institutions*, those agencies and programs which help the individual give order and purpose to his experiences in the private sphere. Among the most important of these secondary institutions is religion.[33] For increasing numbers of persons the experience of psychotherapy or participation in encounter groups represent important elements in their "coming to terms" with the freedom that greets them in the private sphere.[34] The great interest in hobbies, especially the do-it-yourself phenomenon of the 1950s, might also be seen as part of the quest for meaning in the private sphere.

Another secondary institution, marriage, is discussed in some detail in one of Berger's articles from this period.[35] Marriage, he argues, is the "place" where the individual is most free to "take a slice of reality and fashion it into his world." (p. 7) It is at home that one can "safely exercise his world-building proclivities without upsetting any of the important social, economic, and political applecarts." (p. 17) It is in this article that Berger gives perhaps his most concise statement of the concept of the private sphere. He writes:

> Large numbers of people in our society are quite content with a situation in which their public involvements have little subjective importance, regarding work as a not too bad necessity and politics as at best a spectator sport. . . . The individual in this situation, no matter whether he is happy or not, will turn elsewhere for the experiences of self-realization that do have importance for him. The private sphere, this interstitial area created (we would think) more or less haphazardly as a by-product of the social metamorphosis of industrialism, is mainly where he will turn. It is here that the individual will seek power, intelligibility and, quite literally, a name -- the apparent power to fashion a world, however Lilliputian, that will reflect his own being: a world that, seemingly having been shaped by himself and thus unlike those other worlds that insist on shaping him, is translu-

> cently intelligible to him (or so he thinks); a world in which, consequently, he is *somebody* -- perhaps even, within its charmed circle, a lord and master. (p. 7)

My own research on communes, group marriage, and other experiments with new patterns of intimate association has led me to believe that many of these attempts to create alternate forms of the "family" are the result of the frustrations which reform-minded persons felt in the face of their inability to solve larger social problems. Much of the energy which in the 60s was invested in efforts to achieve racial justice and to end the Vietnam War is now being invested in the transformation of the "nearer world" of the family.

It should be noted that in Berger's view it is not only one's *activities* that are divided into the public and private. Personal identity is also dichotomized. The structural patterns of modern indistrial society leave individuals uncertain as to "who they are."

IX

I shall close this chapter with a brief look at three very important and intimately interrelated methodological elements which are found in all of Berger's work as a social theorist: *verstehen*, *value-freedom*, and *dialectic*. These qualities are all prominently on display in Berger's work prior to 1966 and they continue as key motifs thereafter.[36]

Berger's understanding of the *verstehen* dimension of sociological inquiry is taken from Max Weber. The Weberian position Berger sees as being half way between the historicist approach (which advocates empathetic listening but which insists that causality cannot be established in human affairs because the system is too complex)[37] and the positivist approach (which seeks cause-and-effect explanations in every case). Sound social inquiry demands a balance between closeness to and distance from the phenomenon studied.

The *verstehen* approach always *starts* with the subjective experiences of social actors; it appreciates the truth of W. I. Thomas' oft-quoted dictum that if people define a situation as real, it *is* real in its consequences. The investigator must bracket his own values, hopes, and fears. Put simply: He must shut up and listen. With the actions, intentions, and feelings of the actors as his data, the sociologist then seeks to typify, to theorize; he seeks to devise the larger explanatory frame within which the data can best be understood. The goal of *verstehen* analysis is *not* psychological insight. The sociologist moves from subjective meanings (as reported by social actors) to objective understanding.

Sociological inquiry in the positivist tradition seeks to know, in order to predict, in order to control. In Weber's view social science may or may not be able to predict. Prediction is not seen as the only appropriate goal for social inquiry. The goal of *verstehen* analysis as understood in the Weberian tradition is the establishment of cause-and-effect relationships, *but* for both Weber and Berger there are some social realities which do not allow such resolution. In those cases in which simple causation cannot be demonstrated but in which two or more social phenomena arise together and apparently reinforce one another, Weber and Berger press into service the notion of *elective affinity*. This concept suggests that certain phenomena "seek each other out" and support one another without any development clearly being the cause of another.

Verstehen analysis, Berger insists, does not abolish the requirement that sociological inquiry be value-free.[38] Again, Berger is a student of Weber and for Weber sociology was, from start to finish, a study of values. He thought values to be the most important thing about a society and, incidentally, in this he thought himself to be in some tension with Marx. (For some Marxists, if not for Marx himself, values are derivative superstructure generated by a fundamental economic substructure.)

But in Weber's view -- and in Berger's -- the goal of social science is *the value-free study of values*. The investigator must seek to bracket his own values in the service of a better understanding of the values of others. Weber repeatedly made his position on this matter quite clear. He wrote: "Whenever the man of science introduces his personal value judgment, a full understanding of the facts ceases."[39] An empirical science, Weber insisted, cannot tell anyone what he *should* do. Rather, its task is to tell him what he *can* do.[40] Weber realized that the social scientific approach was but one of a number of possible ways of addressing oneself to social life but that if one chose that approach, one must then discipline one's efforts according to the canons of the scientific method. All other commitments, he insisted, must be suspended. In this same vein, Berger has described the sociology of religion as "a discipline which can (and, indeed, must) study human values but which cannot decide whether these values are in themselves true or false, good or bad."[41]

From all this it follows that for Weber and for Berger a sociologist's partisan speaking and writing -- political, theological, and otherwise -- are to be done outside of his role as sociologist. In this commitment both Weber and Berger stand in some tension with Durkheim because although Durkheim too advocated the eradication of the presuppositions of the investigator,[42] he tended to see sociology as -- at least potentially -- a moral science; he believed that social theory ought to lead to ethics, to advocacy.

A question, then, emerges: How can Berger maintain his commitment to value-free social inquiry without sacrificing his own moral values on the altar of abstract science?[43]

I have often felt that it would be easier to be Weber than to be Durkheim. Weber "plays it safe"; he refuses to prescribe. (This seems unfortunate since persons with the kind of detachment and modesty which Weber manifests could probably come up with better solutions to social problems than most. There never seems to be a scarcity of less well-informed persons who are willing to offer their opinion as to what ought to be done.) Durkheim often strikes me as an admirable figure -- more willing to risk a plan or a program. It is easier to be a penetrating critic than to invent an alternative that works. For social progress, it would appear, are needed *both* the incisive analysis which makes clear to us our predicament and the failures of past efforts *and* some suggestions -- based in the social reality thus revealed -- as to what we might do about it.

I can now see, however, that it is very difficult to be Weber too. To believe that one sees certain hidden truths about the social structures which others view so superficially but to refrain -- at least in

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one's professional writings -- from commenting on what we ought to do (and thus to preserve one's credibility as an objective inquirer), that too is difficult . . . and perhaps psychologically dangerous as well.

Berger has adopted this Weberian appraoch. He studies social reality objectively, as a scientist. He tries to describe it as it is, quite apart from his own hopes and fears -- although he admits that he might sometimes be unsuccessful in this attempt. Beyond mere description, beyond mere data-gathering, he tries to explain, to conceptualize, to invent heuristic devices so that understanding is enhanced, so that others see more than a chaotic bundle of data. But there he must stop -- or else he must disclaim, at least temporarily, the role of social scientist. If he wishes to say more, if he wishes to "engage his values," he must set aside the mantle of the sociologist and write or speak as a private citizen. This Berger does by means of a steady stream of articles in popular periodicals -- especially in the *Christian Century* and, more recently, in its only slightly more "secular" counterpart, *Worldview*.

There are, however, in Berger's writings some clues which suggest that perhaps these two different kinds of writing are not so diametrically opposed as he insists. Berger's work in value-free sociology always seems to be pushing the reader up against the moral questions implicit in the phenomenon under discussion. And the "non-scholarly" articles always seem to be rooted in careful social analysis. At the very least it would be fair to say that in Berger's work the gap between value-free sociology and advocacy is very narrow. Berger seems to be able to move gracefully from one of these spheres to the other -- and to carry along with him a great deal of what he has learned in the other.

Again and again, in Berger's view, the way out of the various moral dilemmas and methodological dark alleys of social inquiry is to be found in some version of the concept of the *dialectic*. Note, for example, the dialectical aspects of the *verstehen* approach. It seeks to combine important concerns of the historicists and the positivists although one might easily view their positions as polar opposites. The social scientist is urged to listen empathetically but -- because he (ideally) does not let his own values get in the way -- he ought also be able to move beyond reported experience to generalizations, to typifications, to theory. Such efforts at explanation will not always allow the investigator to establish unilateral causation. At such points it is the task of the social scientist to identify elective affinities -- dialectical relationships among social phenomena. Further, the sociologist ought to recognize that his typifications, once spoken or published, may well have an effect on the persons and behavior studied.

Throughout Berger's work one is conscious of his preoccupation with the dialectical relationship between social institutions and individual consciousness, between practical activity and self-understanding -- a preoccupation clearly dependent upon Hegel, Feuerbach, and Marx. Berger offers concise summary of this concern -- and makes evident his debt to Marx, Weber, and Schutz -- in an article which appeared in 1967:

> Human consciousness emerges out of practical activity. Its contents, pretheoretical as well as theoretical, remain related to this activity in diverse ways. This does not mean that theoretical consciousness, or "ideas," are to be understood as mere epiphenomena or as dependent variables determined in a one-sided causation by nontheoretical, non-"ideal" processes. Rather, theories and ideas continually interact with the human activity from which they spring. In other words, the relationship between consciousness and activity

> is a dialectical one -- activity produces ideas, which in turn produce new forms of activity. The more or less permanent constellations of activity that we know as "societies" are, therefore, in an ongoing dialectical relationship with the "worlds" that form the cognitive and normative meaning coordinates of individual existence. Religious worlds, as much as any other, are thus produced by an infrastructure of social activity and, in turn, act back upon this infrastructure.[44]

Here again we see Berger siding with Weber against Durkheim. Durkheim and his school emphasized the objective and the coercive elements of all social phenomena. It was the great contribution of Weber to focus some of the light of social inquiry on the subjective meanings of social actors. Berger summarizes thus:

> While the typical Durkheimian question about a social phenomenon is "How is this related to society as a whole?" the typical Weberian question is "What meaning does this have for the people involved?" (*Vision*, 107)

Berger's use of Weberian motifs should, however, not be seen as indicating a lack of appreciation of Durkheim. Berger is convinced that viable social theory must build on the work of both of these classical theorists. He has in common with Durkheim -- and with other social thinkers such as Rousseau and Freud -- a high awareness of the process of *internalization*. The individual is seen as adopting an available belief and making it his own. The individual, in turn, himself the sum of everything he has internalized, acts and in acting may change the social order of which he is part. New ideas, says Berger (again following Weber), *do count*. They are not mere reflections of the economic substructures (as some Marxists would argue) nor are they futile gestures of an individual who has no chance of affecting the social order (a view to which the writings of Durkheim sometimes give aid and comfort).

Every human activity, in Berger's view, has the potential for bringing into existence new realities which in turn become part of the environment which conditions man. The day the flesh shapes and the flesh the day shapes.[45] Each individual act of creation adds to the established patterns which give direction to human activity. Language, for example, is a human invention but once it has been formulated, men find that its rules dominate both their speaking and their thinking. (*Canopy*, 9 and 96)

Berger's commitment to a dialectical understanding of the relationship between the individual and society is reflected in *Invitation* in his treatment (in successive chapters) of "Man In Society" (social control) and "Society In Man" (socialization, internalization). In *The Social Construction of Reality* and in *The Sacred Canopy* he describes human activity as a cycle with three moments": *externalization*, by means of which individual actors project meanings out onto the world, *objectivation*, by means of which some of what men have externalized becomes meaningful for others and part of their "real" world, and *internalization*, by means of which individuals appropriate elements of the objectively-available realities and make them part of individual consciousness. From one's stock of internalized facts, beliefs, and values the individual formulates that which he will project out in further acts of externalization. The influence of Weber is again apparent in that Berger nearly always lists externalization *first* -- although he consistently presents the three moments as thoroughly interdependent.

But, in Berger's view, men tend to "forget" the dialectical nature of social life. Much of what he writes for both scholarly and popular outlets is concerned to remind us again and again that the human world is humanly produced, that the realities we see around us have human origins, that they are not rooted in some inevitability over which we have no control.[46]

In *Invitation* and in Berger's articles published in 1964 and 1965 the reader can see him assembling the theoretical resources of the sociological tradition in preparation for his own comprehensive theoretical statement. Early in *Construction* he sums up his debts thus:

> Our view of the nature of social reality is greatly indebted to Durkheim and his school in French sociology, though we have modified the Durkheimian theory of society by the introduction of a dialectical perspective from Marx and an emphasis on the constitution of social reality through subjective meanings derived from Weber. (p. 17)

In the next chapter there will be presented a discussion of Berger and Luckmann's basic theoretical positions and the kind of sociology of religion that Berger bases on them.

Notes to Chapter 3

1. The characterization of this phase of his career as "transitional" should not be read as suggesting that Berger's writings from this period are without intrinsic merit. Some of his best work -- work that is still of interest -- was done during this period.

2. *American Sociological Review*, April 1964, p. 286.

3. When *Invitation* appeared, the *Christian Century* (March 20, 1963) reported: "Berger is well known to our readers as a social critic of American religious institutions; religion plays little part in this particular book, however." And the Lutheran journal *Una Sancta* (25:1, p. 133) lamented the "loss" of Berger thus: "Since moving from the seminary to academic sociology, Berger is no longer In among churchmen. More the pity. His abrasive and at times brutal analyses of American religion are offered for healing and not for hurt."

4. *American Journal of Sociology*, July 1964.

5. *American Sociological Review*, April 1964, pp. 285f.

6. *Invitation* has sold over 600,000 copies and been issued in fourteen foreign editions.

7. From these considerations there follow certain implications pertinent to citing *Sociology* in a study such as the present one. We must keep in mind that it is an introductory text. Thus, we cannot go to it for a sophisticated treatment of any topic -- although chapter 17 could stand by itself as an excellent discussion of some key theoretical issues in the sociology of religion. We go to it rather for indication of Berger's priorities, for clarification of issues treated elsewhere in his writings, and for illuminating comparisions with *Invitation*.

8. See, e.g., *Canopy*, 179.

9. Robert Bierstedt, "Sociology and Human Learning," *American Sociological Review*, 25 (February 1960): pp. 3ff. For discussion of sociology and the humanities see Robert W. Friedrichs, *A Sociology of Sociology*, pp. 125ff.

10. Robert Nisbet, "Sociology as an Art Form," in Maurice Stein and Arthur Vidich, eds., *Sociology on Trial* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1963), p. 151.

11. For a helpful discussion of these matters see Friedrichs, *A Sociology of Sociology*, pp. 205 and 311. See also John F. Glass and John R. Staude, eds., *Humanistic Society* (Pacific Palisades, Cal.: Goodyear, 1972).

12. See Friedrichs, *A Sociology of Sociology*, p. 309.

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13. Stein and Vidich, eds., *Sociology on Trial*, p. 1.

14. *Invitation*, 44f., 46, and 19. *Sociology*, 37f.

15. Berger's discussion of the sociology of knowledge is in *Construction*. For his use of Mannheim see *Invitation*, 137 and *Sociology*, 345. For Berger's reservations with the image of the detached intellectual see *Movement*, 14.

16. "Reification and the Sociological Critique of Consciousness" (with Stanley Pullberg), *History and Theory*, Spring 1965, pp. 203f.

17. John Wilson notes this. Cf. "The De-alienation of Peter Berger," p. 432.

18. "Letter on the Parish Ministry," *Christian Century*, April 29, 1964, p. 548.

19. See Arnold Gehlen, *Urmensch und Spätkultur*, second edition (Frankfurt-am-Main: Athenäum Verlag, 1964). For Berger's discussion of Gehlen's work see his article "Arnold Gehlen and the Theory of Institutions" (with Hansfried Kellner), *Social Research*, 32:1 (Spring 1965), pp. 110ff. I have been aided in my understanding of Gehlen by a paper written by one of Berger's graduate students: Gretel D. Weiss, "Changing Ritual in the Church: An Inquiry in Terms of Gehlen's Theory of Institutions," (unpublished manuscript, Rutgers University, 1971).

20. For Berger's discussions of this matter see *Construction*, 47-91 and *Sociology*, chapter 4.

21. Quoted by Carlos Castaneda in *Journey to Ixtlan* (excerpt in *Psychology Today*, December 1972, p. 108).

22. See Berger's discussion, *Construction*, 53. Cf. Philip Rieff: "A culture survives the assault of sheer possibility against it only so far as the members of a culture learn, through membership, how to narrow the ranges of choices otherwise open. . . . To prevent the expression of everything: that is the irreducible function of culture." (The quotation is from Rieff's introduction to Oscar Wilde, *The Soul of Man Under Socialism*, New York: Harper and Row, 1970, p. xv.)

23. Weiss, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

24. See Robert Musil, *The Man Without Qualities* (New York: Capricorn, 1965). The first volume (of which the cited edition is about half) was originally published in 1930. There are two other volumes plus a large number of unpublished chapters, some of them existing in as many as twenty versions. For Berger's discussion of the novel see "The Problem of Multiple Realities: Alfred Schutz and Robert Musil" in the Schutz *festschrift* entitled *Phenomenology and Social Reality* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971) edited by Maurice Natanson. For further discussion of

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man's world-openness and its attendant promise and peril, see Robert Jay Lifton's provocative essay "Protean Man" in his *History and Human Survival* (New York: Vintage, 1971).

25. William James, *Pragmatism* (New York: World, 1955), p. 167.

26. It should be noted in this context that the Western understanding of the self is dependent upon a theatrical metaphor: Our word *person* comes from the Latin *persona*, stage mask.

27. From the introduction to Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., *Mother Night* (New York: Avon, 1961), p. v.

28. "Reification and the Sociological Critique of Consciousness," p. 206.

29. Quoted in Paul Young, *The Lennon Factor* (New York: Stein and Day, 1972), at the beginning of part I.

30. Cf. Friedrichs, *A Sociology of Sociology*, p. 305.

31. See *Noise*, chapter 5, *Sociology*, chapters 7 and 8, and Berger's article "Assault on Class" (with Brigitte Berger), *Worldview*, July 1972.

32. Berger's use of the concepts *public and private sphere* is dependent on the work of three contemporary German social thinkers: Helmut Schelsky, Jürgen Habermas, and Arnold Gehlen.

33. Of course, in the pre-modern situation -- marked by Roman Catholic hegemony -- religion was part of the public sphere.

34. See Berger, "Towards a Sociological Understanding of Psychoanalysis," *Social Research*, Spring 1965, pp. 26ff. For discussion of the article see chapter 6.

35. "Marriage and the Construction of Reality" (with Hansfried Kellner), *Diogenes*, Summer 1964, 1ff.

36. My understanding of Berger's position on these matters and of his relationship to the history of sociological thought has been served by my having sat in on his graduate course in sociological theory at Rutgers University, fall 1970.

37. This historicist assumption is at work in the writings of Immanuel Kant, Wilhelm Dilthey, and Eduard Meyer. In this tradition the freedom of human beings is seen as making cause-and-effect analysis and prediction virtually impossible.

38. It is not my purpose here to provide a comprehensive discussion of the place of values in social science. The intention is more modest: To make clear how Berger views this matter and to make manifest some of the sources of his position.

39. Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation" in H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds., *From Max Weber* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), p. 152.

40. Weber, *The Methodology of the Social Sciences* (New York: Free Press, 1949), p. 54.

41. "Religious Institutions" in Neil Smelser, ed., *Sociology: An Introduction*, p. 334.

42. Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method*, 31ff.

43. This question will recur as we proceed. For further discussion see chapter 7. See also Berger, "Sociology and Freedom," *American Sociologist*, 6 (February 1971), p. 5.

44. "A Sociological View of the Secularization of Theology," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Spring 1967, p. 10.

45. Frank Herbert, *Dune* (New York: Ace, 1965), 190f.

46. Berger's article "Reification and the Sociological Critique of Consciousness" is an important statement of this persistent concern. It also makes clear Berger's debt to Marx and provides a link between *Invitation* and *Construction*.

Chapter 4 SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE AND SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION

The Search for a Method

> The world is the veil we spin
> to hide the void.
>
> Norman O. Brown

I. Collaboration with Luckmann; a new context for the sociology of religion. II. The Social Construction of Reality; *expanding the sociology of knowledge. III. Dialectical relationship of consciousness and society. IV. Religion as a social product. V.* The Sacred Canopy. *VI. Secularization and privatization. VII. Return to substantive definition of religion. VIII. Importance of the definitional debate. IX. The ecclesiastical and theological dimensions of Berger's position.*

I

The summer of 1963 -- the summer between Berger's last year at Hartford Seminary and his first year at the New School -- saw the publication of the article "Sociology of Religion and Sociology of Knowledge"[1] in which many of the themes that were to occupy Berger in the mid and late 60s were set forth. This programmatic essay includes a number of provocative hypotheses which Berger developed more fully in major articles on marriage, psychoanalysis, and secularization.

"Sociology of Religion and Sociology of Knowledge" was the first manifestation of Berger's collaboration with Thomas Luckmann, a German sociologist and close friend of Berger's since their student days at the New School. It is not possible to gauge with any precision the impact of the association with Luckmann on the work of Peter Berger. It is clear, however, that when they began their collaboration in 1962, Berger was the author of two popular volumes of religious sociology and a number of articles, in several of which he implicitly or explicitly urged the churches to right themselves. The early fruits of his work with Luckmann include the article "Sociology of Religion and Sociology of Knowledge" and the book *The Social Construction of Reality* -- both of which may be seen as parts of a conceptual bridge back to the study of religion.[2] After these labors with Luckmann, Berger no longer focuses on churches and theologies. Rather, he sees the sociology of religion as part of an "expanded" sociology of knowledge. It would seem safe to guess that the dialogue with Luckmann and with other European thinkers and the exciting intellectual milieu of the New School were important factors in the shifts in Berger's understanding of the sociological study of religion.

I shall adopt the convention of citing material co-authored by Berger and Luckmann as though they are statements Berger made. I believe that this does no violence to his position *but* this should not be taken as an indication that I have doubts about the importance of Luckmann's contribution. In *Construction* there is no indication that some chapters were written by one of the authors and some by the other. Apparently matters on which they could not agree were simply omitted from the book.[3] I shall, on occasion, offer some judgment as to the importance for one or the other of them of certain motifs which appear in their joint efforts and I shall relate elements of the jointly-written materials to later writings by both men. Anyone who has read both will probably join me in assuming that Berger is the coiner of most of the vivid imagery in *Construction*.

In "Sociology of Religion and Sociology of Knowledge" Berger and Luckmann charge that the sociology of religion has invested too much of its energies in the study of churches and denominations -- thus implicitly criticizing Berger's own earlier work. They are sharply critical of "religious sociology" -- especially when it is funded by or conducted in the service of religious institutions. Such "religious market research," they insist, makes value-free inquiry impossible because the investigator is very apt to adopt the official "management viewpoint" of his employers in the religious bureaucracy.[4] Religious sociology, they note, has little in common with the study of religion one finds in the work of such classical sociologists as Weber, Durkheim, and Pareto -- although they concede that the work of some contemporary sociologists such as Gerhard Lenski and Milton Yinger is rooted in the classics. The focus of the field, Berger and Luckmann conclude, should be broadened so as to encompass new forms of belief and commitment.

Analogously, they argue, the sociology of knowledge has invested too much of its energy in the study of the ideas of the intellectual elite and not nearly enough in the study of that knowledge which, on the commonsense level, is taken as social reality -- even if it does not fit into the official version of how things are.[5] The sociology of knowledge, they insist, ought to be expanded so as to consider folk wisdom -- that which "everybody knows." Berger has elsewhere defined the sociology of knowledge as the study of the relationship between society and consciousness.[6]

In other words, the kind of inquiry encouraged here need not restrict itself to the study of more or less well-codified "knowledge" such as religious doctrines, the laws of the land, and the like. More diffuse phenomena can be approached from the same perspective. For example, Berger and Luckmann write: "Our approach encourages the sociological analysis of contemporary sexuality, its myths and its rituals." (p. 71) One is reminded of Freud's recognition that sexual patterns were

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as susceptible to unmasking as were the pretensions of traditional religion. In *The Future of an Illusion* Freud wrote:

> Having recognized religious doctrines as illusions, we are at once faced by a further question: may not other cultural assets of which we hold a high opinion and by which we let our lives be ruled be of a similar nature? Must not the assumptions that determine our political regulations be called illusions as well? And is it not the case that in our civilization the relations between the sexes are disturbed by an erotic illusion or by a number of such illusions?[7]

Anything that people "know," Berger and Luckmann argue, is fair game for the sociologist of knowledge.

If one expands the sociology of religion so as to include folk religion and if one expands the sociology of knowledge so as to include folk wisdom, it will be discovered that the two areas of inquiry overlap considerably. More precisely, it will be discovered that the sociology of religion is a part -- a very important part -- of the sociology of knowledge.

Berger and Luckmann are encouraging a major shift of focus for the sociology of religion -- from religious institutions to *symbolic universes*, to those basic paradigms within which men "make sense" of human experience. The resulting sociology of religion would continue to study churches; it would continue to study such historical manifestations of religious concern as Christianity and Judaism. *But*

> the sociology of religion will also have to deal with other legitimating systems, whether one wishes to call these religious or pseudo-religious, that are increasingly important in a secularized society (such as scientism, psychologism, Communism and so forth). Indeed, only if the latter is done will it be possible to obtain an adequate sociological understanding of the phenomena that persist within the traditional religious systems and their institutional manifestations. (pp. 69f.)

This conclusion is important; I shall say more about it below. For now, however, it is important to note at least the following: (1) In the article under discussion Berger and Luckmann implicitly adopt a broad definition of religion and call for a functionalist approach to the sociology of religion. (2) Luckmann has continued to hold to the position set forth in this article. In *The Invisible Religion* he devotes himself to the study of post-traditional phenomena which function as traditional religions once did. (3) Berger does not again explicitly move in this functionalist direction and in an appendix to *The Sacred Canopy* he indicates his unwillingness to expand the notion of religion so as to include those symbolic universes which do not posit the existence of a sacred order. (pp. 176f.)

At many points in his writings, however, Berger seems to be suggesting that traditional religions and non-supernatural systems of macro-meaning are functional equivalents. In a discussion of "alternation" (conversion experiences) in his dissertation he wrote:

> . . . the alienated intellectual becomes a Communist, the Communist spy becomes a Catholic informer, the Catholic priest becomes an anarchist, the anarchist becomes psychoanalyzed and turns reactionary, the Freudian becomes a Jungian, and the Jungian becomes an Anthroposophist. (p. 182)

The same point is made again in *Vision* (chapter 2). And in *The Social Construction of Reality* there is a fable -- a fable which Berger has told me is his work -- in which the chief theoretician of a society in microcosm responds to a loss of faith in a cosmogonic myth by devising a new myth, the principal components of which are taken from Freud and Parsons. (pp. 82-85) But despite these repeated suggestions of the functional similarity of sacred cosmoi and other systems of macro-meaning, despite the call (with Luckmann) for a sociology of religion which would include secular meaning systems, and despite his own thoughtful analyses of certain humanistic alternatives to traditional religion, Berger explicitly opts for a substantive definition of religion in Appendix I of *The Sacred Canopy*. He continues to insist that the sociology of *knowledge* must be expanded considerably. But he comes to feel that the sociology of *religion* should concern itself only with those enclaves *within* the sociology of knowledge at which *sacred* symbol systems are being elaborated. And by *sacred* Berger means essentially what Rudolf Otto meant by *das Heilige*, that which is totally other than man, a separate reality which confronts him from outside himself. (*Canopy*, 25)

II

As early as *Vision* Berger had affirmed the desirability of bringing together role theory and an "expanded" sociology of knowledge. (p. 55) It is to this task that he and Luckmann turn in *The Social Construction of Reality* -- to which they gave the modest sub-title, *A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. The result is an impressive macro-level systhesis of which Helmut Wagner has said:

> The scope of the book transcends any sociological specialty. If anything, the book is an outline of a general sociology on the basis of a socio-phenomenological approach.[8]

Construction is dependent upon Alfred Schutz's amalgam of Husserl's phenomenological method with Weber's *verstehen* sociology and with George Herbert Mead's symbolic interactionism. The resultant theorizing focuses on typified everyday reality as the fundamental paradigm. Following

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Schutz and Mead, the authors see language and its utilization in conversation as the means by which shared knowledge is built up and connected into schemes of meaning. The result is that sociology of language, sociology of knowledge (its traditional boundaries partially erased and redrawn), and the sociology of religion (implicitly including much more than the study of religious institutions) are brought together in a larger theory of culture. Berger sums up this interplay as follows:

> Our understanding of the sociology of knowledge leads to the conclusion that the sociologies of language and religion cannot be considered peripheral specialties of little interest to sociological theory as such, but have essential contributions to make to it. This insight is not new. Durkheim and his school had it, but it was lost. . . . We hope we have made it clear that the sociology of knowledge presupposes a sociology of language, and that a sociology of knowledge without a sociology of religion is impossible (and vice versa). (*Construction*, 185)

The sociology of knowledge as a "received tradition" concerned itself primarily with the ways in which intellectual life is conditioned by social context. It treated, in particular, the ways in which ideas become ideology. As such, the field focused on the "big ideas," the mental products of professional intellectuals. In *Construction* Berger and Luckmann seek to broaden this focus.[9] It is not their intention to "expand" the sociology of knowledge until it becomes epistemology for to do so would take their inquiry outside of the bounds of the empirical discipline of sociology (*Construction*, 14) but they do wish to utilize the sociology of knowledge perspective in the study of materials other than the externalizations of professional intellectuals.

> Only a very limited group of people in any society engages in theorizing, in the business of "ideas," and the construction of *Weltanschauungen*. But everyone in society participates in its "knowledge" in one way or another. Put differently, only a few

> are concerned with the theoretical interpretation of the world, but everybody lives in a world of some sort. (*Construction*, 15)

This concern is significant in light of certain aspects of our situation in contemporary Western society. The self-conscious business of world-interpretation and even world-construction is becoming the concern of an ever-growing number of people -- at least in their private lives. This is a function of (1) growing affluence which encourages reading and thinking as leisure-time activities and (2) the simple fact that human arrangements sometimes break down. In particular, the worldviews which once sustained us (worldviews most of which were supplied by traditional religion) do not "hang together" for large numbers of literate individuals of middle-class and above. Most of these people are not well-trained, full-time professionals but many of them are reasonably well-read. They watch television, talk to one another, and think about things which once concerned only the intellectual elite. In other words, certain prerogatives of the intellectual elite -- notably access to information that challenges their basic assumptions and a tendency to worry about things which others take for granted -- are becoming the prerogatives of the literate middle class mass.[10] Berger elsewhere acknowledges this process of "democratization" as follows:

> Probably for the first time in history, the religious legitimations of the world have lost their plausibility not only for a few intellectuals and other marginal individuals but for the broad masses of entire societies. (*Canopy*, 124)

Berger and Luckmann, then, wish to expand the scope of the sociology of knowledge. They summarize their concern this way:

> The sociology of knowledge must concern itself with whatever passes for "knowledge" in a society, regardless of the ultimate validity or invalidity (by whatever criteria) of such "knowledge." And insofar as all human "knowledge" is developed, transmitted and maintained in social situations, the sociology of knowledge must seek to understand the processes by which this is done in such a way that a taken-for-granted "reality" congeals for the man in the street. In other words, . . . *the sociology of knowledge is concerned with the analysis of the social construction of reality.* (*Construction*, 3, emphasis in the original.)

This "new" sociology of knowledge, as Berger had argued in an article which appeared in 1965, must invade the private sphere of the ordinary individual.

> The sociology of knowledge must not only be concerned with the great universes of meaning that history offers up for our inspection, but with the many little workshops in which living individuals keep hammering away at the construction and maintenance of these universes.[11]

It should be noted that this approach shifts the attention of the theorist away from exclusive focus on logical coherence, on patterns that "make sense" to the scientist. At least some attention must be given to "plausibility structures," to the patterns which are subjectively real to individual social actors regardless of whether or not they seem compelling to the theorist. Again, if people define their situation as real, it *is* real in its consequences.

III

It is in *Construction* that Berger spells out the dialectical understanding of man and society which he introduced in *Invitation to Sociology*. As has already been suggested, Berger, like Durkheim, acknowledges that there exist social facts, objective realities which are external to the individual and which are able to coerce his behavior. But unlike Durkheim, Berger does not stop there. He also gives attention to the means by which those objective realities came into existence -- as did Marx and Weber -- and he explores the nature of their impact on individuals -- as did Freud.

Again in *Construction* Berger uses cyclical imagery to describe the complex interplay of ideas, social forms, and individual consciousness and he names the principal moments of that cycle *externalization*, *objectivation*, and *internalization*. Individuals have ideas and groups of individuals press their ideas upon others. That is, individuals externalize their concerns; they share them with others. Of all the millions of gestures individuals externalize, a relative few "take." That is, they have impact on others. Indeed, they become "real" for others -- so real that they take on the qualities of objectivity. They now confront others -- persons other than their creators -- as social facts, as givens. For example, the efforts of a set of parents (their externalizations) result in the construction of certain patterns of family life. These patterns -- in the devising of which their children played little or no part -- are there to greet children born into the family. The patterns have objective reality to children -- *and* the power to coerce conformity to the family's values. Indeed, what is expected of children is that they will adopt the ways of the family as their own without more than token resistance. That is, they are expected to internalize family values.

This same cycle is at work in the larger social world which adults inhabit. I find myself in a world in which there are already in operation certain institutions such as, for example, the American political system. This system greets me as an objective reality with which I must come to terms. From childhood I am taught that this is "the way things are" and I internalize the system as given. But to this rather static, data-transfer view of the matter Berger adds two elements which sociologists often overlook. He reminds me that I may contribute to the ongoing reconstruction of the political order. Values, ideas, feelings, and concerns which I may externalize can become part of the new system. The resulting change may be significant or insignificant depending upon my effectiveness in the community of my contemporaries but, at least in some small measure, things have changed because I have acted.

Berger's other modification of a simple unidirectional model of socialization consists in reminding us that through careful historical and sociological analysis I can discover the origins, the causes, of the system into which I am born. Seeing existing political order as humanly constructed, I am more apt to see it as alterable by human intervention. The political status quo is thus desacralized. Its objective reality is not merely something I internalize; it is also something to which I can contribute. Indeed, it is something to which I and my contemporaries *must* contribute. The recognition that one's actions have an impact, however small, is the first step toward feelings of self-worth and awareness of responsibility. As Sartre put it: "Even when I make a cup of coffee I change the world."[12]

It should be noted, however, that when Berger speaks of externalization, objectivation, and internalization, he makes no mention of the *political* fact that some people do not get to do any substantial amount

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of effective externalizing. Wealth and influence are not equitably distributed in most societies and even in groups which give lip service to democratic ideals, there seems to be a tendency toward oligarchy.[13] Mention of this fact would have added credibility to Berger and Luckmann's discussion of this matter.[14]

As was suggested above, this dialectical understanding of man and society as mutual products suggests the possibility of a synthesis of the views of Durkheim and Weber. Berger spells this out in *Canopy*:

> Weber's understanding of social reality as ongoingly constituted by human signification and Durkheim's of the same as having the character of *choseité* as against the individual are *both* correct. (p. 187)

Berger feels that this synthesis brings Weber and Durkheim together without losing the fundamental intention of either -- such a loss having occurred, in his opinion, in the Parsonian synthesis. Berger continues:

> The two understandings are only correct *together*. A quasi-Weberian emphasis on subjectivity *only* leads to an idealistic distortion of the social phenomenon. A quasi-Durkheimian emphasis on objectivity *only* leads to sociological reification, the more disastrous distortion toward which much of contemporary American sociology has tended. (p. 187)

Berger admits that Weber and Durkheim themselves would not necessarily accept his systhesis but he is sure that the "intrinsic logic" of their positions invites such theoretical extension.

In this stress on the dialectics of social construction, we again sense a moral purpose -- and not merely a neat tying together of earlier theoretical positions. Once again, sociological understanding is directed toward an expansion of freedom. Robert Friedrichs has taken note of this theme in *Construction* and summed up the moral thrust of all of Berger's work as follows:

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> Berger and Luckmann are moved by a larger dialectical urge: to free sociologists -- and ultimately, laymen -- from the fetters of a social "reality" that is after all but man's own creation. This would permit him to escape the more indirect manipulation that results from the internalization of that "reality" as the "really real" through an "ecstatic" act of apprehension which affords man insight into the social source of his compulsiveness. Through such a phenomenologically informed extension of the posture of the sociologist of knowledge, they are able to project a "sociological consciousness" whose air of debunking relativism cuts through our tendency to reify our social product and thus alienate ourselves from our existence as fundamentally creative and responsible beings.[15]

I concur with Friedrichs' judgment that Berger and Luckmann are motivated by a strong moral sense -- and, in a similar fashion, I can largely agree with Philip Selznick that "an unspoken theological premise" is at work in *Invitation*. Further, if it can be demonstrated that there are strong moral undercurrents in these two very "secular" books, we shall have taken a giant step toward this conclusion: An *ethical* framework may well be the best single perspective within which to make sense of Berger's career and from which to understand his view of religion and of the sociology of religion. More evidence to this effect will be adduced as we proceed.

IV

The dialectical understanding of the relationship between institutions and individual consciousness which is developed in *Construction* is of special importance in Berger's understanding of religion. The individual is born into a group which has a particular understanding of the sacred and of man's relationship to it. There are already in existence a whole host of religious beliefs and practices which greet the newcomer

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as objective realities of obscure and allegedly divine origin. In Geertz's language: Religious conceptions are clothed with such an aura of factuality that their moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.[16] And yet, in a variety of ways, the individual's security in his religious worldview is eroded. Intellectuals and other marginal figures have always had the data on which to base a certain skepticism about the religious perspectives of the people among whom they lived. In modern pluralistic society, a large number, perhaps a majority of the people, have experiences of "other realities" which challenge the security of the religious world into which they were born and into which they were socialized.

The contemporary individual may, for example, learn something of the history of his tradition. He learns of the intrigues that accompanied ancient definitions of orthodoxy. He reads theologians who added substantial "new twists" to the revered tradition. He sees the foibles of the very human beings who are the current leadership of the religious body. He is exposed to the interpretations of various "outsiders" such as secular intellectuals and representatives of competing religious groups, the integrity of whose own beliefs depend in part on their ability to "explain" his beliefs and those of his community. In time, perhaps, he comes to see his religion as a human product. And even if he continues to believe that these human efforts correspond somehow to something God has done, is doing, or will do, he at least knows that he too can take part. The religious tradition, once viewed as untouchable, he now sees as a fit object for his own manipulations. The tradition has lost something of its sacred aura.

Berger, it must be stressed, is not offering a simple sociologically determined view of religion. He is not arguing that religion is nothing more than a reflection of certain social processes. Rather, he writes:

> . . . the point is that the *same* human activity that produces society also produces religion, with the relation between the two products always being a dialectical one. Thus it is just as possible that, in a particular historical development, a social process is the effect of religious ideation, while in another development the reverse may be the case. The implication of the rootage of religion in human activity is *not* that religion is always a dependent variable in the hisotry of a society, but rather that it derives its objective and subjective reality from human beings, who produce and reproduce it in their ongoing lives. (*Canopy*, 47f.)

To argue that religion is always a reflection of other social processes and that it never "takes the initiative" would be to move beyond the available data. (We recall, however, that Berger did something very much like this in *Vision* and especially in *Noise*.) Such a position, in his reformed view of the matter, is not permissable in a value-free science and must therefore be dismissed as an ideological commitment. Thus Berger leaves the door ajar for the possibility of religious affirmation. He walks through that door in *A Rumor of Angels* (which will be discussed in chapter 5) and in other theological writings. It is worth noting here, however, that the dialectical mode removes the possibility of Berger's continuing to claim with the neo-orthodox that the Christian faith is not subject to the human forces which move other social phenomena this way and that. The Christian, he now admit, has no Archimedean point from which to observe the "merely human" religious enterprises of others. All religious realities are constantly in flux, acting and being acted upon. The Barthian notion of a Christian enclave which is not conditioned by other human experiences, a notion prominent in both *Vision* and *Noise*, is no longer seen as plausible. (*Canopy*, 183f.)

V

The Sacred Canopy, published one year after *The Social Construction of Reality* gave Berger a chance to develop his position apart from Luckmann and to direct his attention more precisely to religion. The book is very different from *Vision* and *Noise* and has been judged by many readers to be a significant contribution to the literature of the field. Few, however, were as given to superlatives as Jeffrey Hadden, who, reviewing *Canopy* in *Commonweal*, called it "the most important contribution to the sociology of religion since Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*."[17]

Some of the material in *Canopy* is new, yet, in a sense, the book may be understood as (1) the development of the implications of the argument of *Construction* for the study of religion and (2) the bringing together of some of Berger's previous asides on religion. Indeed, the first two chapters of *Canopy* repeat the arguments of *Construction* -- and in language a bit more accessible to the non-sociologist.

The distance Berger had come from his first two books and his redesigning of the agenda for the sociology of religion -- to say nothing of the greater receptivity of his sociological colleagues -- are amply demonstrated by these lines from Bryan Wilson's affirmative review in the *American Sociological Review*:

> This book is one of the most important theoretical studies of the sociology of religion to appear in several decades. . . . The book . . . is not, in any direct sense, a study of religious institutions and organizations; it is not concerned with traditional ecclesiologies or religious functionaries, nor, in more than a contingent way, with church and state, church property, religion and morality. . . . Its central discussion is primarily concerned with the function of religion in sacralizing the social world and conferring external reality upon it.[18]

Other reviewers, however, were less enthusiastic. Elizabeth Nottingham, for example, offered this appraisal in the *American Journal of Sociology*: "To a sociologist the book contains little that is new. . . . [It] should find a ready market in seminaries and rabbinical schools."[19]

Berger clearly understood this book to be very different from his earlier books on religion. He wanted *Canopy* to be read as sociological inquiry and not as church renewal literature. He wanted the book to be seen as connected with *Construction*, not to *Vision* and *Noise*. He realized that his past sins against the value-free gospel of social science and the level of abstraction at which *Canopy* moved would tempt his fellow-sociologists to see the book as a theological exercise and so he began the preface to the volume like this:

> The following argument is intended to be an exercise in sociological theory. Specifically, it seeks to apply a general theoretical perspective derived from the sociology of knowledge to the phenomenon of religion. While at certain points the argument moves on levels of considerable abstraction, it never leaves (at least not intentionally) the frame of reference of the empirical discipline of sociology. Consequently, it must rigidly bracket throughout any questions of the ultimate truth or illusion of religious propositions about the world. There is neither explicit nor implied theology in this argument. The brief comments on possible implications of this perspective for the theologian made in Appendix II are not necessary to the argument and do not logically grow out of it. They were motivated by a personal affection for theologians and their enterprise that need not trouble the theologically uninterested reader of this book . . . (*Canopy*, v.)

This is a very interesting way to begin a book. One senses a defensiveness here and one supects that Berger knew that he was going to take a certain amount of flak from his sociological colleagues because he seemed to be straying off toward theology and philosophy. One can applaud Berger's desire to take the sociology of religion beyond unimaginative data-gathering and yet one wonders: (1) Why the defensiveness about the explorations of the theological implications of the argument? and (2) Why include such materials at all? For Berger -- who sees sociology as part of the humanities -- these reflections must be included. For Berger -- the value-free social scientist -- these considerations must not be allowed to contaminate the rest of the argument.

VI

The key to Berger's understanding of the sociology of religion as developed in *Canopy* is the concept of *secularization* which he defines as "the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols." (p. 107)

Berger finds the roots of secularization deep in the Judeo-Christian tradition itself, especially in the teachings of the Old Testament prophets and in the work of the theologians of the Protestant Reformation. Protestantism acted as an agent of secularization when it moved away from

> the three most ancient and most powerful concomitants of the sacred -- mystery, miracle, and magic. This process has been aptly caught in [Weber's] phrase "disenchantment of the world." (*Canopy*, 111)

But the most important single factor contributing to the secularization of modern society is, in Berger's view, the transformation of the social order brought on by science and technology. The resulting affluence has given us time to look around and examine our values. The rationalization of human life which technology brought with it made men less dependent upon the overarching symbol systems which religion provided, more content with demonstrably effective solutions to "smaller" problems. Bureaucratization has taught us that efficient handling of mundane matters may bring us greater happiness than profound wrestling with cosmic questions.

Secularization, Berger argues, is an empirically available process which is of great importance in modern Western history. It affects not only institutions but also individual consciousness. In Berger's words:

> The modern West has produced an increasing number of individuals who look upon the world and their own lives without the benefit of religious interpretations. (*Canopy*, 108)

The Sacred Canopy consists of a theoretical discussion of secularization grounded in the sociology of knowledge plus application of this theory to the contemporary religious situation in the United States and Europe.

Although we often tend to associate the word *secularization* with a post-Harvey Cox liberal stance within the churches, the concept of secularization as a tool for analysis of the religious situation carries conservative implications. Until fairly recently the term *secular* simply referred to the non-ecclesiastical realm. That is, *secular* meant *not church*.[20] Contemporary use of the word carries with it some residues of this usage and Berger's own definition of secularization shows strong preoccupation with religious institutions and symbols.

Implicit in the use of the term *secularization* is an acceptance of a division of social life into two mutually-exclusive spheres, the religious and the secular.[21] This same duality has been called by some the sacred and the profane and by others the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world. Whatever language is used, the message is the same: Standing over and beyond us humans and our social order is a separate reality, a supernatural sphere -- *and* what happens *there* is accorded greater ultimate significance than what happens in the human community.

A student of religious phenomena who uses the concept of secularization as his organizational frame of reference -- as Berger does -- assumes that the religious sphere can be rather neatly set off from the secular and that the observer will be able to chart the expansion of the one at the expense of the other. This is true even if he acknowledges -- as Berger does -- that religion is a human product. (This methodological commitment is analogous to Berger's insistence on the separation of scholarly and non-scholarly writing and of sociology and theology.)

Berger discusses several implications of secularization. One of the most important of these is *pluralism*, the end of that comfortable situation in which everyone shares a single taken-for-granted worldview. Persons living in medieval Europe were confronted by a single worldview, a worldview mediated through the symbols and the institutional reality of the Roman Catholic Church. The Reformation shattered that monopoly and ushered in the age of choice. Berger is fond of pointing out that the root meaning of *heresy* is *choice*. There can be no heresy until the believer is presented with an option. The mere existence of the option is itself a threat to the established worldview whether or not it is chosen.

Since the Reformation the total number of religious options has become exceedingly large -- especially in the United States where separation of church and state and the frontier experience encouraged the proliferation of faiths.

But more important than the increase in the number of available traditional religious perspectives was the emergence of a secular attitude which threatened *every* worldview which claimed some contact with the supernatural. The secular attitude, of course, has many faces from the laziest agnosticism to a thoroughly-footnoted atheistic philosophy. It shows itself in total faith in science and technology and in commitment to Marxist dogma. The literate individual today faces a bewildering variety of worldviews, some fully organized, some less so.

An inevitable consequence of pluralism is *skepticism*. If an individual sees more than one way of being in the world, he is less likely to be a true believer in any single scheme. He will be somewhat detached because his view of things has been relativized by the pressures of competing versions of "ultimate truth."

Berger feels that it is important that we realize that the mood of our times is largely a function of the pluralistic situation in which we find ourselves.

> The contemporary period is widely designated as an "age of skepticism." What is not widely recognized, however, is that this fact is not due to some mysterious metamorphosis of consciousness in and of itself, but is rather to be explained in terms of empirically available social developments. To wit, the pluralistic situation . . . *ipso facto* plunges religion into a crisis of credibility. (*Canopy*, 150f.)

Such skepticism undermines faith in every macro-system of order and sends the individual into a search for meaning on the "local level."

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Here again Berger points to the emergence of the private sphere, that personal enclave in which one seeks the peace of mind that is not available in the fragmented world of the whole society. The growth of the private sphere and the institutions associated with it was the inevitable result of the undermining of the monocosmic view of things enjoyed by persons who lived in premodern times. Among these institutions are the family, the psychology business in its various manifestations, and, increasingly, religion. In such a context one's religion is not so much the worldview into which he was born nor even the worldview which he adopts as an autonomous adult (as in the free church tradition). Rather, one's religion is a synthesis which he works out for himself. It is a custom-made faith. And the historic traditions, in this context, become resource pools from which the individual can draw elements of his personal faith. This is the "invisible religion" of which Luckmann writes.

Such developments do not, however, guarantee that everyone will have a well-thought-out faith which he can articulate to others. That condition is not substantially more likely in the invisible religion than it was in the church-based religion -- and there is hard data to suggest that the masses of church-goers are neither well-informed about their traditions nor theologically sophisticated.[22] Much of the invisible religion is loose agnosticism or "an unstable hierarchy of opinions."[23]

VII

The use of secularization as a fundamental conceptual tool requires a substantive definition of religion and Berger makes explicit his preference for such a definition in Appendix I of *Canopy*. Although an expanded sociology of knowledge suggests that secular idea systems might function for a growing minority of literate folk in much the same way that supernaturalistic systems of order function for the masses, Berger opts for a substantive definition, one which understands the essence of religion to lie in its claim to provide a point of contact with some supra-human reality, with an Other. The flirtation with a functional definition which had been reflected in "Sociology of Religion and Sociology of Knowledge" was at an end. Berger had returned to the formulation with which he had been comfortable at the very beginning of his career. The sociology of religion, as he had written in 1954, is "an ecology of the sacred."[24]

Luckmann, it should be noted, continues to use a functional definition of religion. He feels that a substantive definition is likely to be narrowly ethnocentric. For Luckmann, it is the business of the sociology of religion to locate and explain the universal social processes having to do with the search for self-transcendence and for meaning. Such an inquiry, he insists, must not confine itself to the experiences of any particular time and place.[25]

The key element in Berger's continued insistence that one ought to use the word *religion* only in reference to systems which posit the existence of a sacred order is to be found in his discussion of the problem of theodicy. A fundamental and most difficult task which faces any social order is the explanation of the existence of evil, of chaos, of human failure, and of death.[26]

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Historically, at least in the West, most effective modes of dealing with these problems have involved recourse to explanations dependent upon the alleged existence of some reality which stands outside of the social order in which the explanation is formulated. In the modern West, for the first time, substantial numbers of people do not find value in this notion of fulfillment in some other realm. Some find that Marxism or psychoanalysis or existentialism or some other "secular" ideology offers a better master paradigm than does the Christian faith. The human potential movement in its various incarnations is an important religion surrogate for many Americans of middle class and above. These developments raise a question: Is it possible that such "secular" worldviews will ever replace traditional religions as the way in which most people cope with evil, chaos, failure, and death?

Berger thinks not. A relatively small number of intellectuals and other marginal individuals may be able to live life from some non-supernatural conception of things but the great majority of people, he feels, will continue to require participation in some system of order which makes them feel that they are in touch with a reality "out there,"[27] some source of energy beyond themselves.[28]

Berger believes that the problem of death is central and timeless but he is not sanguine about the possibility that very many people will ever be attached to non-supernatural coping mechanisms. The stoic, says Berger, is an admirable figure -- but very few people have the courage and strength to be stoics.[29]

Although Berger has explicitly stepped back from the use of a functional definition of religion, he has focused much of his own research and reflection on some of the very phenomena which one might think of as religion-surrogates, as alternate locations for ultimate meaning for modern man. His articles on marriage and psychoanalysis, for example, apply the sociology of knowledge perspective to these phenomena.[30] Berger treats these social forms as the means by which people give meaning to their lives. He dissects them with the same enthusiasm, insight, and iconoclastic wit which marked his earlier critiques of church religion. All that is lacking is the willingness to confess that these exercises are continuous with his studies of belief systems which posit the existence of a sacred cosmos. But this is a continuity which Berger will not acknowledge. Rather, he sees these secular forms of the gospel as "totally other" than those worldviews which claim to be in contact with non-human reality. I submit that this is an arbitrary distinction which is a product of a prejudice in favor of existing institutions and of Berger's own commitments to a worldview with a supernatural dimension. It is "dualism" in new dress.

VIII

The question of substantive versus functional definitions of religion is an important one for the sociology of religion. Shall we or shall we not respond to the fact that the most important "religious" experience of our time may well be that religion as we have known it is being replaced for many people by a new form of religion, "religion" which does *not* posit the existence of a sacred order? Such a post-theistic religious quest would seek to understand the human situation through rational inquiry -- even while acknowledging that there are areas of mystery. It might seek transcendence of the human situation through man's scientific and poetic inventiveness[31] but it would make no claims about the existence of God or his willingness to act on behalf of men.

If there had been a sociology of religion in the ancient Roman world at the time of the rise of Christianity, those sociologists might well have been unwilling to include the new faith within the scope of their field. After all, they might have argued, religion has to do with the imperial cult. This new sect is not important; its adherents we dismiss as atheists. They should be studied by those sociologists who specialize in political sociology. Those Christians have nothing to do with religion as we know it.

If there had been a sociology of religion at the time of the Reformation, perhaps its practitioners would have been unwilling to include the Lutheran manifestation of the Christian faith within the scope of their field. After all, they might have argued, everybody knows that the study of religion is simply the study of the Roman Catholic Church. Let the Lutherans be studied by the experts on deviant behavior; they clearly have nothing to do with religion as we know it.

But, of course, there was no sociology of religion in those earlier times. Sociology is a modern phenomenon, an intellectual response to the industrialization of the West and the resulting shake-up of the old order.[32] At the time sociology became a self-conscious mode of inquiry and at the time of the first important sociological probes into the meaning of religion, the overwhelming majority of people in the West adhered to a supernaturalistic worldview. Their overarching schemes of meaning nearly all posited the existence of a sacred cosmos. It is not surprising, then, that the sociology of religion has tended to focus on such systems. (Significantly, however, Durkheim and Weber did not limit their sociology of religion to the study of religious institutions.)

But in our own time, for increasing numbers of our contemporaries, the powerful, overarching schemes of meaning do *not* necessarily include belief in a separate reality, in salvation outside of human history, in a God. It would seem to me, then, that at least part of the energies of the discipline ought to be directed to investigations of non-supernatural meaning schemes, to worldviews which do not revolve around the notion of God.

Let me offer another analogy. Through most of the history of the sociology of the family, pair bonds -- at least in the United States -- were nearly always legalized by means of marriage. Today, however, many couples live together in varying degrees of commitment without benefit of clergy or county clerk. If sociologists of the family were to ignore these non-legal pairs simply because "everybody knows that a marriage is a legal contract . . . " etc., they would be failing to study a very important phenomenon. Indeed, we can probably learn more just now about the family and its future by studying these non-legal pairs. Again, I believe we shall make a mistake if we think of non-legal pairs as deviant forms entitled only to that kind of attention one gives the side show at the circus. Non-legal pairs ought to be studied *as marriages* are studied.[33] Similarly, communes and homosexual pairings ought to receive careful attention from the sociology of the family.

Of course, we may decide that we need a new name for the field. Instead of "sociology of marriage and the family" -- a culturally-conditioned label -- we may wish to designate the field "the sociology of intimate relationships." Sociology, despite all its enthusiasm for value-free inquiry, has tended to take many of its cues from society as it is. We have sometimes allowed the institutional forms which were in existence at the time sociology (or some branch thereof) became a self-conscious mode of inquiry to place boundaries around what we shall study and to prescribe the ways in which it shall be studied.

There is, to be sure, a need to continue the study of the churches and of belief systems grounded in the supernatural. Non-theistic religious orientations are probably still a minority phenomenon in the West. All earlier predictions -- by the voices of the Enlightenment and by liberal thinkers of the nineteenth century -- to the effect that the masses would shortly be converted to non-theistic ways of thinking and viewing the world have been proved wrong by history.

But there are some people whose way of looking at the world does not depend on the existence of God and their quest for meaning is important too. In fact, in light of the fact that the people who do not employ a theistic system tend to be among the better educated and more affluent -- and hence more influential -- people in Western society, it might be argued that their quest is entitled to a little more than a "fair share" of the attention of sociological inquiry into religion.

Milton Yinger has reminded us that the problem of narrow (substantive) versus broad (functional) definitions of religion resists easy resolution because "each of us tends to invest something of his own values in such a definition."[34] Yinger describes four different positions on this question. (1) Some theorists prefer a narrow definition because they respond negatively to the word *religion* and so prefer that it be used only to label outmoded beliefs and actions. (2) Others prefer a narrow definition for the opposite reason: They find value in traditional religion and so desire that new and "unqualified" systems of order not be accorded the honor of the label *religion*. Those who prefer a broader definition -- "the critical extension being the inclusion of naturalistic beliefs" -- are similarly divided. (3) Persons who are unsympathetic to traditional religious worldviews sometimes believe that by including non-supernatural *Weltanschauungen* under the label *religion* they will speed the dilution and perhaps the dissolution of outlooks which they view as outmoded. (4) Others respond positively to the word *religion* but desire a "revitalization" of traditional religions by an infusion of "new blood," that is, they desire a synthesis of traditional and modern themes under the label *religion*.

Yinger confesses his preference for the fourth position and invites other sociologists of religion to examine their own values in this connection. He seems to feel that bias in this area is almost impossible to eradicate but he seems also to believe that discussion can be made more constructive if we are aware of and candid about our personal preferences.

I find Yinger's summation of this matter helpful and I, like Yinger, find my own position best described by his fourth type: The word *religion* ought to be used to describe *all* efforts -- traditional and modern, supernatural and natural -- to make sense out of life at the macro-level. To say this is not to say, for example, that Christian fundamentalism and

Marxism are "the same." Any conceptual device that obscures the substantial differences between these two *Weltanschauungen* ought to be suspect in a discipline that strives for descriptive precision. A more inclusive use of the word *religion* would simply make clear that all macro-level systems of meaning address themselves to the same fundamental human questions. Such a use of the word *religion* would implicitly acknowledge that for many moderns the personal systhesis regarding questions of "ultimate importance," that is, one's invisible religion, has both naturalistic and supernaturalistic elements.

Berger, I submit, falls into Yinger's second category. Berger and many other sociologists of religion find considerable value in traditional religion -- both personally and as a socially-valuable gestalt. They resent the johnny-come-lately "religious" pretensions of the various humanistic worldviews and they wish to protect traditional religion from contamination. It is as though to think of non-supernaturalistic systems of order as religions would be to grant tham a kind of acceptance, an imprimatur.

Berger might respond that his preference for a narrow definition of religion is based not in his own values but rather in a commitment to strive for precision in discussions in the field. In Appendix I of *Canopy* he writes:

> I question the utility of a definition that equates religion with the human *tout court*. It is one thing to point up the anthropological foundations of religion in the human capacity for self-transcendence, quite another to equate the two. There are, after all, modes of self-transcendence and concomitant symbolic universes that are vastly different from each other, whatever the identity of their anthropological origins. Thus little is gained, in my opinion, by calling, say, modern science a form of religion. If one does that,

> one is subsequently forced to define in what way modern science is *different* from what has been called religion by everyone else, including those engaged in *Religionswissenschaft* -- which poses the same definitional problem all over again. I find it much more useful to try a substantive definition of religion from the beginning, and to treat the questions of its anthropological rootage and its social functionality as separate matters.
>
> It is for this reason that I have tried here to operate with a substantive definition of religion in terms of a sacred cosmos. (p. 177)

I share Berger's concern that an expansion of the term *religion* not be allowed to confuse discussion in the field and I expect that we shall continue to find real value in distinguishing between supernaturalistic and non-supernaturalistic systems of order. But I also see dangers in a substantive definition of religion and the resultant drawing of boundaries for the field of sociology of religion.

A substantive definition emphasizes the *discontinuity* between traditional and post-traditional systems of order and it minimizes the probability that persons who think of themselves as sociologists of religion will turn their professional attention to careful analysis of non-supernaturalistic worldviews. I believe that our contemporary situation will be better understood if we emphasize the continuity between traditional and post-traditional systems of order. It also seems to me that persons trained as sociologists of religion will be among the best guides in interpreting non-supernaturalistic worldviews and in clarifying the dialogue between old and new ways of wrestling with basic problems of human meaning.

Put simply, I believe that a substantive definition of religion makes it more probable that the people best trained to illuminate the *contemporary* "religious" debate (the debate between supernaturalistic and non-supernaturalistic worldviews) will give their attention dispro-

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portionately to studies of the religious *past* (the debate among various versions of supernaturalism). To be sure, opting for a substantive definition does not *guarantee* that one will avoid the contemporary debate. Freud, for example, should probably be placed in Yinger's first category. When Freud criticized "religion" he was criticizing religions with a father-god, i.e., Judaism and Christianity. He resisted any conceptualization of religion which would include secular systems of meaning under that label. Despite this commitment, Freud not only helped us better understand secular alternatives to traditional religion, he invented one.[35]

We see, then, that much of the debate over the use of substantive and functional definitions of religion resists resolution. Perhaps most sociologists of religion would agree that it is proper that the discipline give at least some of its attention to the encounter of the traditional religions with non-supernaturalistic macro-systems of order.[36] Many would go further and agree that persons trained in sociology of religion are apt to be perceptive students of these secular worldviews and that they might appropriately give some of their professional energy to the task of describing and explaining them. Much of the debate, then, is over the question of *labeling*. Some feel that the non-supernaturalistic systems of order should be thought of as religions and that the study of them should be seen as a legitimate part of the sociology of religion. This is the position of Yinger, Luckmann, and Bellah -- and it is a position that Berger was willing to endorse in 1963. Others feel that secular worldviews ought not be thought of as religions and that study of them, however important, ought not be seen as sociology of religion. This is Berger's position in *Canopy*, a position which he shares with Charles Glock, Guy Swanson, and many others in the field.[37]

There is no easy way out of this impasse. But perhaps there would be value in utilizing a middle way which borrows strengths from both positions. The non-supernaturalistic worldviews could be described as *religion-surrogates* (suggesting both continuity and discontinuity with traditional religions) and the study of such systems could be described -- at very least -- as an important and logical *extension* of the sociology of religion and, as such, a fit preoccupation for sociologists of religion.

A question arises: Is any scholar who studies, for example, Marxism to be thought of as a sociologist of religion? Probably not. A student of Marxism is a sociologist of religion only insofar as he self-consciously treats the Marxist worldview as a master paradigm.

It is important, in this connection, to remember that most students of Christianity study it *as Christians*, that is, from the "inside." Such study is *not* sociology of religion -- although the conclusions thus reached may become important *data* for the sociologist of religion. Similarly, most students of Marx and Marxism study them *as Marxists*, as devotees seeking a fuller understanding of a body of material within which they believe ultimate truth to be contained. Such study, as such, is not sociological inquiry. Other studies of Christianity and Marxism are undertaken by adherents of *other* worleviews as part of their apologetic enterprise. These exercises, also, ought to be seen as something other than sociology.

It is of interest to note that Luckmann does not tell his readers whether he approves or disapproves of the emergence of the invisible religion. Berger, on the other hand and despite his commitment to value-free inquiry, telegraphs his deep concern over the advancing secularization and the growing importance of the private sphere which he describes. And despite his ability to understand that religion is more than churches and theologies, he returns again and again to the church as the point of reference from which to speak of the contemporary religious situation. His commitment to a substantive definition of religion re-emerges to nibble away at the functional approach which he and Luckmann outlined in "Sociology of Religion and Sociology of Knowledge." Berger, then, does not speak of an emerging "social form of religion" (as does Luckmann) or a "civil religion of the world" (as does Bellah). Rather, he insists, for both the churchman and for the sociologist of religion "the problem . . . is simple -- how to perpetuate an institution whose reality presuppositions are no longer socially taken for granted."[38]

This summation is from one of Berger's key articles, his presidential address to the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion in 1966. This address focuses on his concern about secularization and thereby illuminates this central theme in *Canopy*. In the presidential address he describes the apparent ongoing secularization of theology and develops three options open to the churches in the modern world: retrenching behind sectarian barricades, selling out to secular forces, and cautious *aggiornamento*. The sectarian option is largely unworkable; the realities of secular life in mass society make it very difficult to hold to a view of things that is radically different from what everyone else "knows."

But the embrace of the secular in the uncritical way which Berger felt the death of God theologians were advocating he interprets essentially as a policy of self-liquidation.

> The accomodation option, . . . once taken, . . . has the powerful tendency to escalate to the point where the plausibility of the tradition collapses, so to speak, from within.[39]

This, in Berger's view, will not happen. Institutions tend to be self-perpetuating. When churchmen realize what their conservatives had been telling them all along, namely, that so-called secular theology is dangerous to institutional survival, they will almost instinctively put an end to that kind of thinking. There is a sense in which Berger's prediction has come true with a vengeance. One hears little of the death of God theology in the churches these days. But, implicit in Berger's analysis was the assumption that most of the so-called radical theologians were committed to the church and that they would, when called upon to do so, modify their thinking or, at least, their pronouncements. The churches would then absorb a watered-down and domesticated secular theology and go on with business as usual.

But Berger, because of his residual Christian tendency to think of religion in terms of churches and theologies and because of his conservative socio-political assumption that enduring institutions are the foundation of culture, overlooked what is perhaps the most significant quality of a secular worldview: Those who view the world from a secular perspective have much less vested interest in the perpetuation of the religious institutions and they treasure their associations with such institutions less highly than do their more conservative co-religionists.

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Many of the radical theologians of the mid 60s felt their commitments to the church being relativized by some of the same secular forces which were influencing the theologies they were writing. It did not occur to Berger that within a few years Thomas Altizer, Richard Rubenstein, William Hamilton, James Pike, and Charles Davis would have left institutional religion and given themselves, vocationally, to the university world. But that is what happened.

And laymen of liberal to radical persuasion also found it easy to drop out of institutional religion. They did this -- and in large enough numbers to prevent the clash which Jeffrey Hadden predicted in *The Gathering Storm in the Churches*. The collision which seemed inevitable was averted because the liberals did not feel constrained to stay and fight. As a result, the mainline Protestant churches in the United States are probably a little more conservative than they were a few years ago. The secular themes have, as Berger predicted, been softened and turned to the business of institution-building. Meanwhile, many of the radical theologians and their liberal lay followers have left institutional religion and given themselves to the secular business of building up human meanings in other settings.

The end of the presidential address on secularization is interesting because it reveals some of Berger's commitments -- commitments which have not been swept away nor even very well hidden by his efforts at doing value-free sociology of religion. The last three paragraphs of the presidential address serve the same function as Appendix II of *The Sacred Canopy*. They contain, by Berger's own admission, "a few slightly less than scientific words." (p. 15) Here Berger insists that theology has to do with an Other, with God, and that anyone who does not believe in God should not call himself a theologian. Here Berger slams the door on such notions as "post-theistic theology" and on the possibility of examining non-theistic systems of order as religions. This stance makes clear the substantial differences that remain between Berger and, for example, Luckmann and Bellah. Berger sums up:

> The essence of religion has been the confrontation with an *Other*, believed to exist as a reality in the universe external to and vastly different from man -- something that is indeed "out there," as Robinson puts it. The fundamental religious proposition, therefore, is that man is not alone in reality. . . . The theological enterprise reduces itself to absurdity if it engages itself with the fundamental proposition of religion on any terms other than those of its validity. Is man alone in reality: Yes or no? If one is certain that the answer is "Yes," then, it seems to me, one could do better things with one's time than theology. (p. 16)

Berger, then, by 1967, no longer focuses sociology of religion on the churches and no longer writes in the service of church renewal -- although he still seems concerned about institutional perpetuation. He is no longer comfortable with the Barthian stance which places Christianity outside of the category of religion and makes it immune to the secular critique thereof. But he still defines religion in terms of the encounter with another reality -- in a word, with God -- and he resists any conceptualization which would "reduce" religion to man's search for his own highest wisdom a la Feuerbach.

It is very important to Berger that his sociological writings not give aid and comfort to the cultured despisers of religion nor undermine the commitments of the faithful. His uneasiness in this connection is on display most vividly in the second appendix of *Canopy* and in the preface to *A Rumor of Angels*. The "methodological atheism" which is required of the sociologist of religion should not be confused with atheism *tout court*. (*Canopy*, 180) More than that, Berger seems to feel that the apparently unfriendly secular critique of religion can be an important step on the way to deeper faith. He is as suspicious of faith which has not exposed itself to this critique as he is of the secular orthodoxies to which the non-religious commit themselves. In the second appendix to *Canopy* he sets the stage for his own theological affirmations in *Rumor* thus:

> Only after [the theologian] has really grasped what it means to say that religion is a human product or projection can he begin to search *within* this array of projections for what may turn out to be signals of transcendence. (*Canopy*, 185)

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Notes to Chapter 4

1. "Sociology of Religion and Sociology of Knowledge" originally appeared in *Sociology and Social Research*, 47(1963), pp. 417ff. It was reprinted in Roland Robertson, ed., *Sociology of Religion*, pp. 61ff. Page number references are to this edition. It is worthy of mention that Robertson includes in this reader only four essays under the label "General Approaches and Perspectives." The authors of these articles are Weber, Durkheim, Parsons, and Berger and Luckmann.

2. *The Social Construction of Reality* was conceived as an interdisciplinary enterprise. It began as a cooperative effort involving Berger, Luckmann, another sociologist, and two philosophers. The other three collaborators dropped out because of other priorities and the book, when it appeared, was the work of Berger and Luckmann.

3. For and indication of this see *Canopy*, 177.

4. For examples of the sort of "religious sociology" which Berger and Luckmann criticize, see the contributions of F. Boulard, F. A. Isambert, and E. Pin in Louis Schneider, ed., *Religion, Culture, and Society* (New York: Wiley, 1964). For Berger's further discussion of the proper focus of the sociology of religion, see *Rumor*, 4.

5. As Schutz has written in one of his discussions of the relevance of the work of Husserl to the business of social science: "The basis of meaning . . . in every science is the pre-scientific life-world . . . which is the one and unitary life-world of myself, of you, and of us all." See his "Phenomenology and the Social Sciences" in Joseph J. Kockelmans, ed., *Phenomenology* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1967), p. 452.

6. "The Liberal as the Fall Guy," *The Center Magazine*, May 1972, p. 43.

7. Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1964), p. 55.

8. Wagner's positive appraisal of *Construction* was made available to me as part of Berger's own file of responses to the book. His remarks have not, to my knowledge, been published.

9. Berger and Luckmann and many of their most appreciative readers and reviewers have perhaps underemphasized the diversity of approaches which have been labeled "sociology of knowledge" and, in the process, claimed more originality for *Construction* than is appropriate. Mannheim, for example, did not limit himself to a discussion of ideology. *Ideology and Utopia* contains an implicit theory of what Berger and Luckmann call "symbolic universes" although Mannheim does not use that term.

10. For a useful discussion of this shift see Bellah, *Beyond Belief*, pp. 218-220. Bellah writes: " . . . in modern times, as the intellectual classes have expanded . . . broader and broader strata of the population

have demanded the freedom of conscience that the philosophers traditionally arrogated only for themselves." (p. 219f.)

11. "Marriage and the Construction of Reality," p. 24.

12. Jean Paul Sartre in *Playboy* interview, May 1965, p. 70.

13. The classic study in this connection is Robert Michels, *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy* (New York: Free Press, 1949).

14. Durkheim, it should be noted, *did* stress the relative powerlessness of *every* individual in the face of the social order. Perhaps his most concise statement of this is to be found in *Sociology and Philosophy* (London: Cohen and West, 1953), part III. Hegel (and others) argued that most individuals are powerless before society but that a few "heroes" (world historical persons) are able to redirect history.

15. Friedrichs, *A Sociology of Sociology*, p. 43.

16. Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System" in Cutler, ed., *The Religious Situation, 1968*, p. 643.

17. *Commonweal*, February 23, 1968, p. 628.

18. *American Sociological Review*, October 1968, pp. 843f.

19. *American Journal of Sociology*, July 1968, p. 103.

20. For a discussion of possible meanings of secularization see Larry Shiner, "The Concept of Secularization in Empirical Research," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, VI:2 (Fall 1967), pp. 202ff. and Emily C. Hewitt *et. al.*, "Models of Secularization in Contemporary Sociological Theory," (New York: Auburn Studies in Education, 1972), p. 1. British sociologist David Martin has argued that there is no consensus as to the meaning of "secularization" and so suggests that the term be dropped from sociological discussion. See his *The Religious and the Secular* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969).

21. For a critique of this element of secularization theory see Bellah, *Beyond Belief*, chapter 13.

22. See Rodney Stark and Charles Y. Glock, *American Piety* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), chapter 7.

23. The phrase is Luckmann's. For discussion see *The Invisible Religion*, chapter 6.

24. "The Sociological Study of Sectarianism," p. 475.

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25. For discussion see Hewitt, "Models of Secularization," p. 21.

26. Berger's writings are studded with references to the centrality of the problems of chaos and death -- reflecting the influence of Schutz and the existentialists, respectively. See, for example, *Canopy*, chapters 1 and 2.

27. It should be noted that in some elaborations of the Marxist position the "future" can serve as an "out there." Indeed, in some versions of existentialism, psychoanalysis, and the human potential movement the "in here" can serve as an "out there."

28. Berger's fullest statement of this point is to be found in the unpublished transcript of the Consultation on the Church held at Greenwich, Connecticut, November 1968.

29. For an interesting discussion of non-supernatural ways of coping with death see Robert Jay Lifton, *Revolutionary Immortality* (New York: Random House, 1969).

30. See "Marriage and the Construction of Reality" and "Towards a Sociological Understanding of Psychoanalysis." See also Berger's analyses of such culturally resonant symbols as the alleged "greening" of America ("The Blueing of America," with Brigitte Berger, *New Republic*, April 3, 1971) and the Manson and Calley cases ("Languages of Murder," *Worldview*, January 1972).

31. On non-theistic religious possibilities see Bellah, "Transcendence in Contemporary Piety" in *Beyond Belief* and John Fowles, *The Aristos* (New York: New American Library, 1970). Berger's own reflections on the "signals of transcendence" which may be found in the world of the everyday are in *Rumor*, chapter 3.

32. Cf. Berger, *Sociology*, chapter 2.

33. This imperative is easily misunderstood -- as was Durkheim's insistence that social facts ought to be studied as *things*. My point is this: Unless non-legal pairs are studied in the same way that legal marriages are studied, we are less apt to understand cohabitation -- and less apt to appreciate the impact of this development upon the society's understanding of marriage.

34. Yinger, "A Structural Examination of Religion," p. 88.

35. See Freud, *The Future of an Illusion* (London: Hogarth Press, 1928), p. 57 and *Civilization and its Discontents* (New York: Norton, 1961), p. 21. See also Philip Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968) and Herbert Fingarette, *The Self in Transformation* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965).

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36. For a helpful discussion of this matter from a theological perspective see Paul Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), especially chapter 1.

37. Charles Y. Glock and Rodney Stark, *Religion and Society in Tension* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1965), chapter 1. Guy E. Swanson, *The Birth of the Gods* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960), pp. 9f.

38. "A Sociological View of the Secularization of Theology," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Spring 1967, p. 12.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

Chapter 5 SIGNALS OF TRANSCENDENCE

The Theological Dimension

> A person can be called a lunatic in
> one place and a saint in another
> for reporting the same kind of
> spiritual experience.
>
> Baba Ram Dass

I. Berger's long-standing interest in theology. II. A Rumor of Angels*; Relativizing the relativizers. III. Signals of transcendance. IV. Theological method: A new natural theology. V. Theological conclusions: A chastened theism. VI. Impact of* Rumor.

I

Through most of his career Peter Berger has been interested in theology; many of his books and articles are marked by strong theological undercurrents. We shall do well briefly to review the evidences of his persistent theological concern as a prelude to a discussion of his most ambitious theological essay, *A Rumor of Angels*.

As we have seen, Berger ended his own formal theological education after one year of seminary work. His interest in theology, however, did not end there. In a 1955 article on demythologization he offered this poignant rephrasing of the question with which Rudolf Bultmann and his followers confronted the church:

> How can the Christian communicate the message of the New Testament to this strange creature, modern man, for whom the sky has become empty, an occasion for aeronautics instead of wonder?[1]

As a member of the faculty of the Hartford Theological Seminary, Berger focused on sociology of religion and social ethics but theology remained important to him. Theology, he insisted in *Noise*, can deliver Christians from twin dangers: in the institutional area, expediency, and in the personal area, subjective experience.[2] Just before he left the seminary faculty, we recall, he led the fight for a return to a curriculum which focused on the classical disciplines. The minister, he insisted,

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is first and foremost a theological scholar.

A parallel theme was picked up in the presidential address to the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion three years later.[3] He made it clear that by "theology" he meant words about *God*. Persons who do not believe in God, he insisted, should not call themselves theologians nor should they label their reflections on the human condition "theology." In this rather direct attack on the then-fashionable death of God theologians Berger gave fair warning that if and when *he* wrote theology, it would not be of the "post-theistic" variety, his earlier criticisms of church religion notwithstanding.

The Sacred Canopy, as we have seen, was portrayed by its author as a sociological treatise in which there is no theology, explicit or implied. Yet in the preface Berger confesses to a "personal affection for theologians and their enterprise" (p. v) and at the end of that volume he tacked on an appendix on "Sociological and Theological Perspectives."[4] This addendum came in response to Berger's concern that the "methodological atheism" required by the sociological perspective might be misinterpreted as atheism for its own sake. In that appendix he insists that "to say that religion is a human projection does not logically preclude the possibility that the projected meanings may have an ultimate status independent of man." (*Canopy*, 180).

But the appendix did not satisfy Berger's need to make clear the possible theological implications of his work in the sociology of religion and so he wrote *Rumor*, an essay which is perhaps best understood as an extended theological footnote to *Canopy*.

Rumor is an unusual book; it is hard to classify. Berger seems to think of it as a work in theology, as something which is quite distinct from sociology. Yet the back cover of the paperback edition carries the label "Sociology of Religion" and one of the reviewers quoted there declares the book to be "a decided advance in the Sociology of Knowledge." If some of Berger's earlier books can fairly be called sociology manifesting theological concerns, *Rumor* is theology with sociological roots.

Berger, then, is prepared self-consciously to take up the role of theologian, a role which he likens to that of a witch doctor stranded among the logical positivists. (*Rumor*, 8) He writes as a self-professed Christian but he adds, humorously, that he has not yet found the heresy into which his theological views would comfortably fit. (*Rumor*, ix) Here again Berger portrays himself as marginal man. He is a theological outsider, a man who, as early as *Vision* (p. 187), had compared himself with one who lands on the floor in the game of musical chairs. He confesses that he is an amateur but because he believes that systematic reflection about religion is too important to leave to the theological experts, he is prepared to stick his neck out. (*Rumor*, x)

II

Berger is fond of quoting Anglican theologian W. R. Inge's dictum to the effect that he who would marry the spirit of the age soon finds himself a widower.[5] In the field of religion, Berger believes, this prophecy has come true with a vengeance. In a recent article he sums up the matter as follows:

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> Protestant theologians, deeply impressed with what they thought was the irrevocable secularity of the age, finally wrenched out of themselves a declaration of the death of God -- to be confronted, before the ink was dry on their deicidal treatises, with seemingly endless legions of Pentecostalists, Jesus freaks, astrologers, witches, and other embodiments of renascent Goddism springing up behind every secularized bush. The Catholic Church, out of anguished *aggiornamento*, decided to bring the faith closer to contemporary man by translating the Mass from Latin into the vernacular. This act of accomodation was immediately followed by a period of convulsive disintegration unparalleled since the sixteenth century. One of the more piquant consequences of the effort to spare modern Catholics the spiritual difficulties of the Latin Mass is that some of them are currently babbling away in glossolalia (in growing numbers, apparently), while others are chanting hymns to the Lord Krishna -- in Sanskrit.[6]

This description of the situation is consistent with the diagnosis presented in *Rumor*. The theologians and the liberal clergy, Berger feels, have rushed blindly into unstable alliances with what they take to be modern consciousness. In so doing they have in large measure abandoned their traditions and they have been insensitive to the religious sentiments of the masses.

Theology, for Berger, is a quest for *timeless* truth. But most theologians, he feels, "are overawed by the modern world. They are running after, with tongues hanging out, what pretends to be the latest thing. This is both undignified and foolish."[7] This same gentlemanly distaste for fashion-chasing shows itself in Berger's call for the emancipation of Christianity from a sequence of "mood theologies." (*Rumor*, 52) He sees all fads as dangerous and destructive but he is particularly troubled by fads in theology because, as he puts it,

> The principal moral benefit of religion is that is permits a confrontation with the age in which one lives in a perspective that transcends the age and thus puts it in proportion. (*Rumor*, 95f.)

Rumor begins with a chapter on the alleged demise of the supernatural. In it Berger summarizes the familiar evidence which indicates that fewer and fewer people believe in a separate reality which gives meaning to their lives. The denial of the objective validity of the claims of traditional Christianity, as Berger had noted in the SSSR presidential address, is not new. It is continuous with the liberal-to-radical religious formulations of the nineteenth century. Rather, Berger writes: "What is new . . . is, above all, the resonance of these ideas in a mass public. This fact by itself leads to the suspicion that there is a sociological dimension to the phenomenon."[8]

A key term in Berger's analysis is the *supernatural* which he defines as follows:

> The term "supernatural" . . . denotes a fundamental category of religion, namely the assertion or belief that there is *an other reality*, and one of ultimate significance for man, which transcends the reality within which our everyday experience unfolds. It is this fundamental assumption about reality, rather than this or that historical variation of it, that is allegedly defunct or in the process of becoming defunct in the modern world. (*Rumor*, 2, emphasis in the original.)

This term *supernatural* is a problematic one.[9] In a review of *Rumor* in the *New York Times Book Review* Michael Novak took issue with Berger's use of the word. He wrote:

> All the actual experiences to which Berger points as "supernatural" seem quite solidly "natural." . . . Only his loyalty to . . . Karl Barth . . . persuaded him to use the misleading word "supernatural" for such ordinary experiences.[10]

But, as we shall see, Berger's use of the word *supernatural* is quite deliberate and appropriate. He wishes to suggest that our very "natural" everyday experiences might point *beyond* themselves to the probability of the existence of an other reality of the sort that Christianity has tra-

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ditionally postulated.

Berger acknowledges that sociology and other forms of secular scholarship constitute challenges to the Christian faith and to its supernatural claims. But, he suggests, there is also a way in which the sociological perspective can facilitate the theological task. It does this by "relativizing the relativizers." That is, sociology is a persistent critic, not only of religious worldviews but also of all those perspectives from which religious worldviews might be criticized. It is not only the past that is relativized by socio-historical analysis. Our perceptions of *present* realities are also affected. In Berger's view, any debunking analysis which focuses on the past and excludes the present is incomplete and therefore inauthentic. No value-free analysis can assume the cognitive superiority of the modern consciousness. Berger writes:

> One (perhaps literally) redeeming feature of sociological perspective is that relativizing analysis, in being pushed to its final consequence, bends back upon itself. The relativizers are relativized, the debunkers are debunked -- indeed, relativization itself is somehow liquidated. What follows is *not*, as some of the early sociologists of knowledge feared, a total paralysis of thought. Rather, it is a new freedom and flexibility in asking questions of truth. (*Rumor*, 42)

In other words, the scientific methods which have challenged traditional belief can also be turned on the critics of traditional belief. Indeed, *dis*belief is itself a product of social conditions and, as such, may be studied by the sociologist of knowledge. The skepticism of the professional atheist is as subject to questioning as the simple faith of the fundamentalist. Through such a debunking of the debunkers Berger (as sociologist) proposes to help those theologians who are overawed by the modern age. Once again, sociological imagination is prophecy's profane auxiliary.

III

As we have seen, Berger had written in Appendix II of *The Sacred Canopy* that once one has come to terms with the fact that the religious phenomena we see around us are human projections, it is then possible to begin searching among those projections for evidence that there is, in fact, a supernatural reality. It is that search to which Berger sets himself in *Rumor*.

The way ahead in religion, Berger insists, consists not in relapse into the conservatism of neo-orthodoxy (which he interprets as an interruption rather than a reversal of the secularizing trend) nor in the rush into the "trivialities of recent radical theology." Rather, he suggests, theology must begin with man, the one who projects religious phenomena, and then search inductively for the "signals of transcendence" which are to be found in our anthropological givenness.

Precisely because so few moderns lay claim to any direct experience of supernatural revelation, it is doubly necessary that theology begin with the experiences of everyday life, with the shared data to which everyone has access. (Cf. *Vision*, 188) In keeping with concerns voiced in "Sociology of Religion and Sociology of Knowledge" and in *Construction*, Berger continues to insist that religion is not primarily an activity of intellectuals nor of persons who have received revelations from some supernatural source. Rather, religion is the activity of ordinary people in ordinary circumstances.

Berger locates and discusses five "signals of transcendence": order, play, hope, damnation, and humor. He admits that there are probably others. Two of the signals (order and damnation) are Apollonian; two others (play and humor) are Dionysian. And hope is an attitude which permeates all the rest. Order and damnation point to the social order, to sociological exploration, to predictability and security. Play and humor point to the individual, to psychological exploration, to discrepancy and the experience of chaos. And hope mirrors our confidence that it will all continue to hang together. The signals are arranged biographically, that is, in the order in which they are encountered as one grows up -- except that humor is an overarching attitude toward it all.

Clearly the most important of the signals is order. Berger had devoted the first two chapters of *Canopy* to a rather full discussion of the ways in which man constructs and maintains a sense of order and in a more recent essay he writes: "Order is *the* primary imperative of social life."[11]

It is man's ongoing need to construct an orderly cosmos and not the particular institutions of the empirically-available status quo of which Berger speaks. Indeed, he had earlier chastised Bonhoeffer for seeing specific institutions (such as the family, the state, and the like) as essential realities of the human situation. In an essay on Bonhoeffer's sociology and ecclesiology Berger wrote:

> The tendency of sociological thought, with few exceptions, is toward a nominalistic rather than a realistic understanding of social reality. Empirical perspectives on society do not allow us to construct an ontology of institutions. To speak of the family, the nation, the religious community, and so on, is permissable as an exploratory device, but only as long as we do not

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> forget the character of institutions as humanly invented and humanly maintained conventions. It is one thing to understand the function and utility of these social fictions. It is quite another thing to posit these fictions as the essential realities of human existence.[12]

Man's "orderliness" is a function of his anthropological givenness and, for Berger, this human propensity to order things implies a *cosmic* ordering of things. He writes:

> In the observable human propensity to order reality there is an intrinsic impulse to give cosmic scope to this order, an impulse that implies not only that human order in some way corresponds to an order that transcends it, but that this transcendent order is of such a character that man can trust himself and his destiny to it. (*Rumor*, 56)

Here, as with each of the signals, Berger makes a leap of faith. There is no necessary connection between the discovery of the human propensity to seek and to create order on the one hand and some other reality which/who guarantees that things are ultimately orderly on the other. This point will be developed more fully below. For now we shall do well to note that for Berger every ordering gesture has a kind of sacramental value. The mother who soothes her frightened child with the assurance that everything is all right is contributing to a sense of order in which the child is sustained. The importance of this sort of gesture is stressed by Erik Erikson who argues that it is the child's experience of an orderly, secure environment in his first year of life that makes him able to trust others and make plans later in life.[13]

Berger's signals of transcendence have high affinity with those properties which Simone Weil has called the "needs of the soul" in her book *The Need for Roots*. With regard to Berger's first signal Weil writes:

> The first of the soul's needs, the one which touches most nearly on its eternal destiny, is order, that is to say, a texture of social relationships such that no one is compelled to violate imperative obligations in order to carry out other ones.[14]

A second signal of transcendence is *play*. Here Berger is indebted to Johan Huizinga's book *Homo Ludens*[15] which shows us how play sets up a separate universe of discourse with its own rules. Play does away for a while with the rules and assumptions of the "serious" world.[16] "In joyful play," Berger writes, "it appears as if one were stepping not only from one chronology into another, but from time into eternity." (*Rumor*, 58) Just as human ordering was seen as pointing to cosmic order, so also playful alternations of time and space are seen as pointing to the existence of sacred times and spaces.[17]

Berger also lists *hope* as a signal of transcendence. Human activity, it appears, is always future-oriented. Man is the plan-making animal. But hope is not the same thing as optimism. Optimism about a situation is grounded in empirical evidence that things will probably turn out all right. Hope, on the other hand, is a positive attitude toward the future which is *not* grounded in such evidence. Hope has a kind of irrepressibility which is perhaps best summed up in poet Kenneth Patchen's phrase: "*Hallelujah anyway!*"

Hope, Berger notes, is a key ingredient of most theodicies; in such hope he finds an implicit denial of the finality of death. He realizes that hope which flies in the face of all empirical evidence -- especially the hope which affirms that death is not final -- is dismissed by the modern mentality as rationalization and childishness. In the absence of such "childish hopes," the rational mind insists that we take a more

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"mature" attitude, a stoic attitude such as that which Philip Rieff has described as the "ethic of honesty."[18]

Here, as in the case of each of the signals, Berger has reversed the order one expects in religious argumentation. A deductive theology might proclaim that because there is a God, we have ground for being hopeful.[19] Berger's inductive theology is more modest. It says: The empirically-available fact that I and others like me are hopeful suggests that there might be a God who is the ground for such hope.

A fourth approach Berger intriguingly calls the argument from *damnation*. Certain mega-crimes which human beings commit upon one another -- such as the crimes for which Adolf Eichmann was executed -- strike us as being so horrible that no human punishment is "enough." Such deeds, Berger insists, demand not only condemnation, but *damnation* in the full religious meaning of the word. This means that

> the doer not only puts himself outside the community of man; he also separates himself in a final way from a moral order that transcends the human community, and thus invokes a retribution that is more than human. (*Rumor*, 68)

One may, of course, respond to the "problem" of an Eichmann by embracing the ambiguity and acknowledging that life is absurd, that justice is *not* always done despite man's profoundest hopes. This would, for example, be the stance of the existentialists from whom the young Peter Berger took some important motifs.[20] But the Peter Berger of *Rumor* sees our rebellion against great injustice as a pointer which directs our attention to the possibility of the existence of a suprahuman system of justice, a cosmic moral order which has the last word after human crimes have been horrendous and human punishment inadequate.

The final signal of transcendence Berger discusses is *humor*. The humor motif has been important in his work from the beginning of his career. In a chapter in *The Precarious Vision* entitled "Christian Faith and the Social Comedy" he writes:

> Tragedy accepts the walls of the prison and perceives the human situation in terms of this acceptance. Comedy gives the impression that the walls too are not as grim as they look. Tragedy is perception of the human situation only under the aspect of immanence. Comedy is a signal, an intimation, of transcendence. It is here that its Christian significance is to be found. . . . A Christian understanding of human existence would reverse the common belief that tragedy is more profound than comedy. On the contrary, this Christian understanding would say it is comedy that gives us the more significant insights into the human condition. Tragedy can never go beyond immanence (this, incidentally, is why a Christian tragedy is a contradiction in terms). Comedy can. (*Vision*, 212f.)

Berger developed this position in the context of his acceptance of Bonhoeffer's contention that everything in this world is penultimate. In such a perspective, only that which God has done is worthy of ultimate allegiance. Everything else must be taken less than seriously. By 1969 Berger had separated himself from many of the neo-orthodox formulations which are to be found in *Vision*, but he still seems to believe that the most important discovery one can make about any human phenomenon is that it is incomplete, penultimate, not worthy of man's highest allegiance.

In Berger's view -- and here he follows both Freud and Bergson -- the essence of humor is discrepancy. As with the other signals of transcendence, Berger is prepared to move from the human experience to its divine analog. He writes:

> Discrepancy is the stuff of which jokes are made, and frequently it is the punch line that reveals the "entirely different meaning." The little Jew meets the big Negro. The mouse wants to sleep with the elephant. The great philosopher loses his pants. But I would

> go further than this and suggest that there is one fundamental discrepancy from which all other comic discrepancies are derived -- the discrepancy between man and the universe. It is *this* discrepancy that makes the comic an essentially human phenomenon and humor an intrinsically human trait. *The comic reflects the imprisonment of the human spirit in the world.* This is why, as has been pointed out over and over since classical antiquity, comedy and tragedy are at root closely related. (*Rumor*, 69f., emphasis in the original.)

In his "Letter on the Parish Ministry" Berger carried this theme further by suggesting an analogy between the Christian clergyman and the clown.

> This analogy is not an insult to the ministry; on the contrary, it points to the profound significance of the clown, who dances through the world, incongruous in the face of the world's seriousness, contradicting all its assumptions -- a messenger from another world, in which tears turn to laughter and the walls of man's imprisonment are breached. In this role the clown carries out a vicarious action: it is *for others* that he is clowning. I think that one can speak of the clown, without exaggeration, as a sacerdotal figure. In absurdity and in vicariousness the two figures meet. The clown ministers and the minister clowns. The secret of both is the tale of man's redemption.[21]

In light of these assertions, the humor in Berger's own writing takes on a new importance. It is not merely a humor of style. It is a humor which is important as a meaning-making activity and as a link with a reality beyond the human.

One may, of course, appreciate the redemptive power of humor without seeing it as a clue to the existence of a supernatural order. Novelist Henry Miller, for example, is a self-professed atheist and a pessimist about human affairs. Yet he writes:

> The man who could have made Hitler laugh might have saved millions of lives. . . . I know it is difficult to preserve a sense of humor in a world which produces atom bombs like vegetables. But if we had a stronger sense of humor perhaps there would be no need to resort to that dolorous experiment of self-defense by mutual extinction.[22]

Humor, then, like the other signals Berger lists, strikes some as a clue to the existence of an Other. For others it is merely an important aspect of our finite humanity. It is *this* discrepancy which deserves our further attention.

IV

Berger's theological method is highly suggestive but it is not, of course, new. It is analogous in some important ways to the approaches of Thomas Aquinas[23] and of Rudolf Bultmann. Both of them, like Berger, saw the Christian faith being confronted by a secular way of knowing which seemed to challenge the validity of that faith. For Thomas and his contemporaries the principal challenger was Aristotelian philosophy. In Bultmann's case, the "new factors" were rigorous historical scholarship which called into question the validity of the New Testament message and the rise of existentialist philosophy, especially as manifested in the work of Martin Heidegger. In our own time, in Berger's view, *sociology* is the fiery brook through which theology must pass. Indeed, he writes, it is the "sociology of knowledge that offers the specifically contemporary challenge to theology." (*Rumor*, 29) Berger, then, like Thomas and Bultmann before him, is concerned to discover that higher truth within which can be contained both the Christian faith as a received tradition and the most prominent secular intellectual challenge. Thus, his theological writings, like theirs, should be understood as exercises in apologetics.[24] As he had written in *Noise*: "Christian truth and human integrity cannot be contradictory." (p. 123)

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Berger's theological method also has considerable affinity with the liberal Protestantism of the nineteenth century, especially that of Schleiermacher and his followers. In that tradition, as in Berger's approach, theology is done indictively. The theologian begins with man. He seeks to take seriously the discoveries and insights of contemporary secular scholarship. The scriptures are viewed as important resources but not as direct messages from God. Much attention is given to the ethical implications of theological discourse. And the claims issuing from such a theology are relatively modest. In contrast with nineteenth century liberalism, Berger's theology seems to be rooted more directly in philosophical anthropology. It manifests relatively little interest in non-Western religions and it gives less attention to personal religious experience than did post-Schleiermacher pietism.

Perhaps Berger's work of theological formulation is best understood as an up-dating of natural theology. The new element consists in this: Because of the social sciences we now understand that our nature is not so much biological as *social*. The cultural anthropologists call culture our *second nature* -- and so it is. Gehlen and others have reminded us that we are instinctively incomplete and that it is the experience of socialization that makes us human. Berger developed a theory of man's social nature (in *Invitation* and in *Construction*) and applied that theory in an explanation of man's religious proclivities (in *Canopy*). Now, in *Rumor*, Berger uses what we have learned about human nature as a starting point for theologizing. The result is a theology which begins not with revelation which is the result of divine initiative (as do conservative versions of Christianity) nor with the natural order (as does

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traditional natural theology) but with man the social animal. In such a system of thought everything we learn about mankind is further "revelation" of ultimate reality. (It should be added here that Berger is quite conservative. I suspect that he would say that we are not apt to make any radically new discoveries about mankind -- none that would require substantial redefinitions of human priorities. If I may extend the theological metaphor: For Berger, the canon is essentially closed.)

Berger, then, is an advocate of a new kind of natural theology, a *social theology*. Although, as we shall see shortly, Berger comes to some rather conservative conclusions via this method, his work in *Rumor* places him some distance from Karl Barth and from most conservative contemporary theology. Barth opposed the use of any form of natural theology. All meaningful initiative, he insisted, is God's; our only source of knowledge of him is what he has told us through the incarnation and through the scriptures. In light of this important difference between Barth and Berger, it is quite appropriate that *Rumor* should include some indication of the extent to which Berger finds Barth's formulations unhelpful.[25]

V

Berger's signals of transcendence are intriguing categories, provocative starting points for thinking about the human situation and, if one wishes, for theologizing. It must be borne in mind, however, that within the empirical disciplines these signals prove nothing. Each of them provokes Berger to leap from mundane human experience to some assertion about cosmic order, about timeless truth, about the divine. Each

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such leap, as Berger himself admits (p. 83), is an act of faith. The signals may serve well as heuristic devices for communication with the cultured despisers of religion, but they do not *prove* anything.[26]

This is an important point. Man's proclivity to desire, create, and maintain orderly systems is an empirically-available reality. There are few who would argue against this "fact" of man's nature (although there are those who would be quick to voice modifications). But only the eyes of faith see *cosmic* order, a universe which is humanly significant, "behind" human ordering. Similarly, we all play and in playing create enclaves within the serious world. But only for the faithful are these enclaves analogous to sacred places and sacred times. So also, we often have hopes which cannot be substantiated by the evidence, we are made indignant by heinous crimes against humanity, and we celebrate the discrepancies we see around us in our humor. But in none of these experiences does one necessarily find proof or even a substantial hint that there might exist, beyond the human order, a divine order of ultimate significance. Upon being confronted with these signals one may, with Berger, conclude that they point to the probability of the existence of a sacred order *or* one may conclude that these signals are merely important aspects of the human condition. As Martin Marty wrote in his review of *Rumor*:

> One school of thought sees these signals demonstrating the illusionism which is the base of religion; Berger suggests that they might just as plausibly be seen to point to reality as to illusion.[27]

Marty realizes -- as many reviewers in the religious press did not -- that there is some ambiguity, some openness in the signals of trans-

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cendence. But he also realizes that Berger's intention is to invite us back to the task of theology, not to lead us into post-theistic metaphysics.

One contemporary student of religious phenomena who has made use of starting points similar to Berger's but who has *not* made the "leap" to theistic affirmation is Maurice Friedman. He calls his religious clues "touchstones of reality" and he has this to say concerning them:

> The phrase "touchstones of reality" implies no separate and prior definition of "reality" or any metaphysical absolute. But neither can such touchstones be reduced to one or another form of subjectivism -- whether it be the cultural relativist, the behaviorist psychologist, or the linguistic analyst. They offer no "reality" independent of themselves as "touchstones," but also no "touch" independent of contact with an otherness that transcends my own subjectivity even when I respond to it from that ground and know it only in my contact with it.[28]

One can easily imagine beginning with "signals" or "touchstones" and formulating a thoroughly humanistic system of meaning such as those which are implicit in the thought of Feuerbach and Durkheim. Indeed, even for those for whom such inductive explorations do not lead to belief in a sacred order, there is still the possibility that a discussion such as Berger's will contribute to a rediscovery of ecstasy and metaphysics as crucial dimensions of human life. That is to say, Berger's discussion of the signals of transcendence may be of value to both the man who wishes to believe in God and still live in the modern world *and* the man who feels himself to be without God in the modern world.[29]

Precisely because elements of Berger's argument can be pressed into service by both theists and non-theists, it is important that we realize -- as many superficial readers of *Rumor* apparently did not -- that for Berger the signals do in fact point to the probability of the existence

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of a God who is "totally other and yet accessible in human experience," a God "in whom faith will see the foundation of order, justice, and compassion in the world." (*Rumor*, 89) For Berger the signals point *not* to man's best efforts and highest hopes (as in various forms of humanism) *nor* to the mysterious depths of the individual psyche (as in mysticism and in certain forms of psychology) but to a God who is distinctively Biblical.[30] Berger is quite specific about this:

> *Adversus modernos*, I would, above all, reaffirm the conception of God that emerged in the religious experience of ancient Israel and that is available in the literature of the Old Testament. (*Rumor*, 88)

But the theology which emerges in *Rumor* is not simply a replay of orthodox Christianity. This becomes clear as Berger discusses his christology. The Christ motif he sees as an expression of "the discovery of the redeeming presence of God within the anguish of human experience." (p. 91) In other words, the "discovery of Christ" is, for Berger, one somewhat parochial way of coping with the universal problems of suffering and death, problems which are especially vexing for those who believe in an all-powerful and all-good God. Berger sums up his heresy -- his departure from Christian orthodoxy -- thus:

> The redeeming presence of God in the world is manifested in history, but it is not given once and for all in the particular historical events reported on in the New Testament. I am then constrained to disregard the insistence of the New Testament authors that redemption lies only "in the name" of Jesus Christ (that is, the name that links the historical figure with the cosmic scope of God's redeeming presence). (*Rumor*, 92)

We see, then, that the theology that begins with the signals of transcendence is not christocentric. All talk of Christ Berger understands as theodicy. Christological formulations serve to set the Christian faith off "on the one hand from the timeless ecstasy of all mysticism and on the other hand from the grim imprisonment in history of all this-worldly doctrines of salvation (notably the Marxist one)." (*Rumor*, 91) The theology which Berger formulates is seen as a means of deliverance both from faith in the discoveries which mysticism purports to make deep in the center of the soul and from faith in the structures and the utopian schemes of this world. These motifs will be discussed from psychological and political perspectives in the next two chapters.

We detect in this discussion a reiteration of Berger's belief that an endemic weakness of secular worldviews is to be found in the inability of such ideologies to provide truly satisfying theodicies. The humanist option of stoically affirming absurdity, of admitting that there is no "solution" to the problem of theodicy, appeals to some intellectuals but it will not, in Berger's view, prevail with large numbers of people. And yet, as we have seen, Berger acknowledges that more and more moderns are adopting the secular mentality. Indeed, Berger himself notes a shift to a non-theistic way of coping. He points out that after World War II -- in contrast with the human response to earlier catastrophes -- people asked *not* "How could God permit this?" but rather "How could men act this way?" (*Canopy*, 78f.) Berger, then, seems constantly to be on the verge of tackling the problem of theodicy with post-theistic assumptions -- or at least on the verge of exploring from a sociological perspective the post-theistic theodicy-surrogates which are being produced in our time not only by professional intellectuals but also by members of the increasingly affluent and literate middle class. But he has not yet explicitly done either.

Berger does his theology under the judgment of what Paul Tillich has called "the Protestant principle."[31] This is reflected in part by his willingness to unleash his secular discipline on religion. Like some of the most important nineteenth century Protestant theologians and like Bultmann, Berger has turned the sharp implements of empirical inquiry upon theistic faith. Because he does this and because the faith seems to survive, Berger is an attractive figure to those who affirm (or who once affirmed) a theistic view of things and who still wish to salvage certain Christian motifs for use in a world come of age. People who *want* to believe in God are delighted when a reviewer tells them that eminent sociologist Peter Berger has proved the existence of God. This development is ironic in light of the fact that Berger's intention is clearly to raise consciousness and to lead the believer into and through the dark valley of doubt.

One reviewer in a religious periodical described Berger as "a sociologist using his professional skills to support his theology" and as "a helpful witness to all who seek a rationale for their faith."[32] A Presbyterian reviewer began his comments on *Rumor* thus:

> In the present impasse of theology, yet another voice is heard calling the churches to take account of the supernatural dimension -- and again the voice comes, significantly enough, from the universities, this time from the very secular discipline of sociology.[33]

John Cobb in a review in *Theology Today* (July 1969) wrote:

> The impact of this book is powerfully reassuring to those who cling anxiously to the Christian faith. It will be widely read and much appreciated.

Another reviewer had this to say:

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> For those who are finding the atmosphere in the secular city polluted and stifling, Professor Berger offers an invigorating breath of celestial fresh air.[34]

Newsweek's religion reporter saw *Rumor* and Martin Marty's *The Search for a Usable Future* as heralds of the end of secular city religion[35] -- and both of these books were included in the *New York Times Book Review*'s list of outstanding books of the year. The same Martin Marty, interestingly enough, closed *his* review of *Rumor* like this:

> Berger may take some of his long time readers by surprise. He now has a somewhat more positive view of religion than he did in the past, and his old Kierkegaardian harshness has begun to mellow. He can be *homo ludens*, making games out of desparately serious affairs. He provides breathing space for many of a generation that was being suffocated by constricting man-unto-himself language in theology. His may be the first plank in a platform for the 70s.[36]

Early in *Rumor* Berger writes: "In a world full of Nazis, one can be forgiven for being a Barthian." (p. 18) This is clever. But Berger was still something of a Barthian in 1961 -- by which time there were not many Nazis left. But perhaps there is a deeper message implicit here, namely, that people tend to adopt conservative theologies when the world is in turmoil, when chaos threatens. Sociological imagination shows us that the world is *always* in turmoil, *always* at the brink of chaos. It will not do for the sociologist or the theologian to cry "peace, peace" when there is no peace.

Berger, then, is in revolt against the death of God theologians of the late 60s and against the secularization of religion which they represent. *Rumor*, a theological treatise with sociological roots, anticipated and contributed to a chastened return to theism -- a return *from* a more humanistic formulation of religious concerns.

Notes to chapter 5

1. "Demythologization: Crisis in Continental Theology," *Review of Religion*, November 1955, p. 239. Cf. the question with which *Vision* opens: "Can a truly contemporary person be a Christian?" (p. 8)

2. See *Noise*, 124. A similar concern manifests itself in the political sphere in Berger's essay "Between Tyranny and Chaos." He is constantly concerned that we be delivered from both the tyranny of institutional structures and from the chaos that comes when we concern ourselves exclusively with personal experience.

3. "A Sociological View of the Secularization of Theology."

4. The appendix, with minor changes, appeared as an article entitled "Sociology and Theology" in *Theology Today*, October 1967.

5. "The Liberal as the Fall Guy," p. 38; *Rumor*, 22.

6. "Liberal," p. 38.

7. Quoted in *New School Alumni Bulletin*, February 1969.

8. "Secularization," p. 5.

9. Similarly, the use of the word *angels* in the title seems to have caused considerable confusion. The headline over a review of the book in the Buffalo *Evening News* (February 8, 1969) read: "Argument for belief in angels." Reviewers in the religious press were either troubled or reassured by the prominence of the words *supernatural* and *angels* -- depending upon their own theological positions.

10. *New York Times Book Review*, April 6, 1969, pp. 10ff.

11. "Sociology and Freedom," p. 3, emphasis in the original.

12. "Sociology and Ecclesiology" in Martin Marty, ed., *The Place of Bonhoeffer* (New York: Association Press, 1962), p. 78.

13. Erik Erikson, *Childhood and Society* (New York: Norton, 1963), chapter 7.

14. Simone Weil, *The Need for Roots* (New York: Putnams, 1952), p. 10.

15. Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens* (Boston: Beacon, 1955).

16. For a helpful discussion of the mythic and ritualistic power of play see Clifford Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight" in *Daedalus*, Winter 1972, pp. 1ff.

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17. Play, it should be noted, is a universal human quality. Leisure is not. Leisure is a uniquely modern part of the private sphere, a socially-conditioned response to industrialization. Cf. *Sociology*, 246f.

18. Philip Rieff, *Freud: The Mind of the Moralist* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1961), pp. 329ff.

19. See, for example, Sam Keen, "Hope in a Post-human Era," *Christian Century*, January 25, 1967, pp. 106ff.

20. For a pertinent discussion see Stanford M. Lyman and Marvin B. Scott, *The Sociology of the Absurd* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1970), especially chapter 1.

21. "Letter on the Parish Ministry," p. 549.

22. Henry Miller, *Reflections on the Death of Mishima* (Santa Barbara: Capra Press, 1972).

23. At least one Roman Catholic reviewer (James J. Conlin, S.J. in *Best Sellers*, January 15, 1969, p. 432) sees the signals of transcendence as "a rehash of the 'five ways' of the Thomists in a more modern recipe."

24. For Berger's views on the place of apologetics in the theological curriculum see "Toward a More Scholarly Ministry," pp. 526f.

25. Cf. *Rumor*, especially pp. 49-53 with Berger's much more appreciative evaluation of neo-orthodoxy expressed and implied in *Vision* and *Noise* (especially pp. 135-137 of the latter).

26. Berger, of course, is well aware that he has not proved the existence of God. He seeks simply to establish that the recognition that religion is a human product does not sweep away the possibility that such a human product might point to a transcendent reality. After all, he argues, mathematics is a human product, a projection of human consciousness, yet modern science continues to discover that nature too is in its essence a fabric of mathematical relationships. In Berger's words: "The mathematics that man projects out of his own consciousness somehow corresponds to a mathematical reality that is external to him, and which indeed his consciousness appears to reflect." (*Rumor*, 47)

27. *Christian Century*, January 15, 1969, p. 89.

28. Maurice Friedman, "Touchstones of Reality," in *Searching in the Syntax of Things* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), p. 3.

29. Cf. Charles Glock: "I try to make a distinction between the supernatural conceptions of the world . . . and conceptions which are not supernatural but which are transcendent, in the sense that these are things to which we are beholden. . . . Societies need one or the other." (From the unpublished transcript of the Consultation on the Church held

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at Greenwich, Connecticut, November 1968.)

30. For confirmation of this judgment from a theological perspective somewhat to the left of Berger's see John Cobb's review of *Rumor* in *Theology Today*, July 1969, p. 221.

31. See *Rumor*, 84. Cf. Paul Tillich, *The Protestant Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948).

32. Short review in *The Moravian*, March 1969.

33. Review in the *Presbyterian Outlook*, June 30, 1969, p. 15.

34. *Pulpit Digest*, February 1969.

35. *Newsweek*, February 24, 1969, p. 56.

36. *Christian Century*, January 15, 1969, p. 89.

Chapter 6 PSYCHE AND SOCIETY

The Psychological Dimension

> A culture survives principally by the power of its institutions to bind and loose men in the conduct of their affairs with reasons which sink so deep into the self that they become commonly and implicitly understood -- with that understanding of which explicit belief and precise knowledge of externals would show outwardly like the tip of an iceberg.
>
> Philip Rieff

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I. Sociology and psychology as competing paradigms. II. Self and society in dialectical relationship. III. A sociological analysis of psychoanalysis. IV. Sociology of knowledge analogous to psychoanalysis.

I

The sociological tradition has historically been marked by a certain amount of indifference -- sometimes even hostility -- toward psychology. This tendency is in part rooted in Emile Durkheim's concern to establish sociology as a separate science and to oppose its absorbtion into an enlarged psychology. Durkheim insisted that social phenomena are not merely the product of the individual's own ideas or will. They are, rather, external to the individual and have the power to coerce his behavior.[1] It is important to realize that in the early years of this century both sociology and psychology were new disciplines struggling for self-identity and acceptance in the academic world. Thus, in some of the literature of that period, sociology and psychology have the appearance of warring sects. Freud once described sociology as "applied psychology" and the sociological tradition is often content to portray psychology as the post-facto study of a single end product of the socialization process -- that is, the individual.

But Peter Berger, despite his commitment to the sociological perspective, sees the need for careful exploration of those dimensions of the human experience which we call the psychological. This persistent concern is reflected throughout the Berger corpus. In an important essay on psychoanalysis (which will be discussed below) he writes:

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> The sociologist cannot concede to the psychologist exclusive rights to that vast area we commonly call psychological. It was precisely the great achievement of George Herbert Mead to show how the sociologist may enter this area without abandoning the presuppositions of his own discipline.[2]

In his first two books Berger made clear his interest in certain key psychological questions and set forth some elements of his understanding of the framework within which the psychological dimension must be explored. In *Noise* he argues that religion tends to be psychologically functional. That is, religion helps the individual feel at home in the social world in which he must live. But Berger insists -- as had Durkheim before him -- that the psychological functionality of religion is itself grounded in the social existence of religion. (p. 91) That is, the sociological categories are primary; psychology is best understood within a sociological framework. Sociology, then, emerges as the master paradigm within which psychology makes sense. In Berger's view, the very use of such psychological terms as "mental health" and "adjustment to reality" overlooks the decisive fact that reality is socially constructed.[3]

Berger's position on this matter is interesting in light of his having elsewhere written that a religious sect or worldview must not only produce a system of beliefs which appears to its adherents to be internally consistent, but must also have a way of explaining other worldviews. In *Invitation* he writes:

> Intensive occupation with the more fully elaborated meaning systems available in our time gives one a truly frightening understanding of the way in which these systems can provide a total interpretation of reality, within which will be included an interpretation of the alternate systems and the ways of passing from one system to another. Catholicism may have a theory of Communism, but Communism returns the compliment and will produce a theory of Catholicism. To the Catholic thinker the Communist lives in a

> dark world of materialist delusion about the real meaning of life. To the Communist his Catholic adversary is helplessly caught in the "false consciousness" of a bourgeois mentality. To the psychoanalyst both Catholic and Communist may simply be acting out on the intellectual level the unconscious impulses that really move them. And psychoanalysis may be to the Catholic an escape from the reality of sin and to the Communist an avoidance of the realities of society.[4]

In other words, to be compelling a particular theology must somehow "contain" all competing theologies. Such alternate definitions of ultimate reality cannot be ignored but neither can they be allowed to appear as "equals" of the worldview being articulated. In Berger's formulation sociology "contains" psychology in much the same way that Christian theology "contains" Judaism: Judaism, for the Christian, is important but as a *component* of Christianity.

For Berger the relationship between the sociological and the psychological is dialectical. Neither dimension makes sense without the other. Yet, at certain points in his writing, he seems to suggest the "priority" of the sociological. He summarizes his position thus:

> Our psychologists tell us that the mentally healthy individual is one who is capable of coping with reality. What they commonly overlook is that reality itself is socially constituted. (*Noise*, 92)

In other words: Psychology concerns itself with the individual's relationship to "reality." But this "reality" to which the individual must adapt himself is the social order in which he lives. And -- as Berger has argued in all of his work -- sociological analysis reveals to us that the social order is itself a human construct, the product of the labor of individuals.

It is interesting to note again in this connection that when Berger describes the cyclical relationship among ideas, institutions, and individual consciousness, he nearly always lists *ideas* (externalization) first. Although he does not explicitly assign priority to any of the three moments which make up the cycle, by consistently listing externalization first he *implicitly* gives a kind of priority to new ideas, to creativity, to initiative. This is in striking contrast to Durkheim and his school who insisted that sociology had relatively little to say about the individual and about new input into the social system. But Berger's emphasis on externalization does not lead him to assign priority to psychological categories. Sociology studies the macrocosm within which the microcosm of psychology is located. Thus sociology is -- at least implicitly -- the master paradigm. This emphasis is in harmony with the Durkheimian tradition.[5]

Another element of Berger's understanding of the psychological is apparent in his early writings. Psychology, in Berger's view, tends to look for truth within the self, within the individual. Depth psychology he views as mysticism in new dress. Such neo-mysticism can turn one's attention away from concrete social realities and from the God who is wholly other. Thus the psychological perspective has the power to offend both Berger the sociologist and Berger the theologian. In *Noise* he is at pains to insist that "the encounter with the Christian faith is with something outside of ourselves. The Christian faith is not a mystical path into the mysterious depths of our own being." (p. 115) This same concern is voiced again several years later in *Rumor*:

> In its central conception of God the biblical tradition . . . is set off sharply against the great religious traditions of India and the Far East, and also against the this-worldliness and neo-mysticism of modern Western secularism, which, whenever it becomes restless in its prison house, can look for an escape only in one

> or another expedition into the alleged depths of human consciousness itself (as in the various forms of contemporary psychological salvation). . . . Mystical religion . . . always looks for salvation within the putative depths of human consciousness itself. This is why the term "neo-mysticism" fits much of what goes on today under the banner of psychotherapy. All these quests for salvation from within are diametrically opposed to the biblical conception of God as one standing outside and against man. (p. 89)

As early as *The Precarious Vision* Berger sees psychotherapy as a secular version of the quest for salvation. In a fictional excursus in that book he describes the part psychoanalysis plays in a young man's search for meaning. (pp. 31-42) And in a footnote Berger makes it clear that he sees "no validity whatever" in the psychoanalytic interpretation he has utilized. (p. 230)

Berger again displays his conviction that the psychoanalytic perspective can be a functional myth in a provocative illustration in *The Social Construction of Reality* (pp. 82-85). There Berger describes a society-in-microcosm which consists of a heterosexual male, a bi-sexual female, and a lesbian. These three live on an island and support themselves by gathering flowers and selling them to the people who live at the other end of the island. It is important, Berger insists, that both their sexual interaction and the economic activity fit into some meaningful sense of order. For the sake of the stability of the whole system, Berger suggests, the man may present the other two with a mythological formulation in which it is said that the world was created in two stages, the dry land by the creator god copulating with his sister, the sea in an act of mutual masturbation by the latter and a twin goddess. Following the creation, the story continues, the god and the two goddesses joined in a great flower dance with the result that flora and fauna were created. Such a myth would make both the sexual interactions among the three and their shared economic enterprise seem to be part of a larger system of order. As in so much primitive mythology, the essential activities of the human beings involved are seen as imitations of the cosmic order. But, Berger continues, there may come a time when such a mythological formulation no longer seems plausible. A more modern explanation is required -- one from social science. And so the man, our mythmaker turned social scientist, analyzes the whole situation and draws the following conclusions. The two varieties of sexual activity express deep seated psychological needs. To frustrate these needs will lead to "dysfunctional" tensions. Further, the sale of flowers picked by the three does, in fact, earn for them money with which they can buy food. The sexual activities, then, may be seen as functional in terms of the personality system while their shared labor is functional in terms of the economic sector of the social system. Here, then, Berger presents both psychoanalysis and structural functionalism as myth systems, alternative story-forms within which things seem to make sense.

II

The dialectical social psycholcgy which one finds in Berger's work is greatly influenced by George Herbert Mead.[6] Of particular importance for our purposes is the notion of the internalization of social reality as the means by which the self is formed.[7] In the Meadian formulation personality is understood as the result of the process of learning, of socialization. The human organism interacts with his environment,

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both natural and cultural, and gradually learns -- or internalizes -- a picture of "reality." The individual's interaction with his environment is given direction by "significant others" -- especially parents. The individual adopts particular functional patterns of behavior made available to him as social roles. Indeed, in Mead's view, it is through role-playing that the young individual "tries out" various styles of life and it is through "taking the role of the other" that he develops empathy and fellow-feeling. The individual comes to understand himself as both "I" (the autonomous self) and "me" (the social self, the roles he is expected to play). The Meadian formulation has little to say about innate instinctual drives (Freud's id) or about deeply buried mental processes (the unconscious). Like Mead, Berger gives no attention to alleged psychic realities which are not empirically-available. Rather, he sees personality formation as the result of the socialization process. Such a psychological model makes no mention of "hidden depths."

Berger emphasizes the dialectical relationship between the self and the social order. Man makes society; society makes man. Every "mental state" is a social product which has its meaning in a social context and which may itself alter the very social system in which it occurs. Put simply: One's mental state is what one *knows*. There is no mystery in this apart from the difficulty of knowing with precision by what social forces an individual has been most influenced.It follows from this that the sociology of knowledge, because it studies what people "know," is an integral part of social psychology.

An individual's "identity," then, consists of his internalization of a particular bundle of roles. Identity becomes a "problem" only when an individual is unsure about the roles he is playing or about the priority of some roles over others. Berger writes:

> The possibility of "individualism" (that is, of individual choice between discrepant realities and identities) is directly linked to the possibility of unsuccessful socialization. . . . Unsuccessful socialization opens up the question of "Who am I?" . . . The "individualist" emerges as a specific social type who has at least the potential to migrate between a number of available worlds and who has deliberately and awarely constructed a self out of the "material" provided by a number of available identities. (*Construction*, 171)

Every encounter with deviant behavior raises questions about one's own socialization. The response "There but for the grace of God go I" is replaced by "If he can do that, why shouldn't I?" New possibilities are constantly being opened up. The question that modern society poses is this: Will so *many* possibilities open up such that individuals will be unable to choose between them?

The identity problem, in Berger's view, is a relatively new one. It is a product of modern social conditions. In the pre-modern world -- in medieval Europe for example -- everyone knew who he was and who everybody else was. Even if they were not happy with who they were, at least they *knew* who they were. Berger writes:

> To be a peasant involved problems of all sorts, subjectively real, pressing, and far from happiness-producing. It did *not* entail the problem of identity. One was a miserable, perhaps even a rebellious peasant. But one *was* a peasant. Persons formed under such conditions are unlikely to conceive of themselves in terms of "hidden depths," in a psychological sense. . . . The peasant apprehends himself in one role as he is beating his wife and in another as he cringes before his lord. In each case, the other role is "under the surface," that is, not attended to in the peasant's consciousness. But neither role is posited as a "deeper" or "more real" self. In other words, the individual in such a society not only is what he is supposed to be, but he is that in a unified, "unstratified" way. (*Construction*, 164f.)

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In Berger's view we learn our identity socially and we hold onto it because other people keep confirming it. In the modern situation the feedback the individual receives from others does not consistently reinforce any one simple understanding of himself. An unsureness about one's identity results.

The radical pluralism of the post-industrial world creates an identity crisis for the individual and a crisis of credibility for institutions concerned with the maintenance of particular identities. When plausibility structures are multiplied they all become weakened as a result.

III

Berger's views on psychological models in general and on psychoanalysis in particular are spelled out in the 1965 article "Towards a Sociological Understanding of Psychoanalysis." A rather full discussion of this essay is in order here not only for what it reveals about Berger's understanding of psychoanalysis but also because it provides an excellent example of his ability to dissect and examine a post-traditional religion-surrogate.

In the two decades since the end of World War II psychoanalysis had become well established in the United States -- especially in the minds of eastern intellectuals -- as both a mode of therapy and a basis for a secular worldview. Berger's penetrating critique of this movement may be seen as continuous with his critical writing about church religion and other integrative frames of reference. Berger was as disturbed by the

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uncritical reception which intellectuals gave to psychoanalysis as he was by the uncritical acceptance of church religion by suburbanites. Berger's interest in psychoanalysis was doubtless reinforced by the fact that he had worked as a psychotherapist in the United States Army from 1953 to 1955 (while simultaneously completing his dissertation and teaching at the University of Georgia).

Despite its impact on Western society, psychoanalysis has not received much professional attention from sociologists. Robert Friedrichs reports that

> only six articles from the inception of the *American Sociological Review* to 1965 are listed under the subject heading "psychoanalysis" in its indices; indeed, only one of these appeared later than 1946.[8]

Some sociological writings of the subject, such as John Seeley's work in *The Americanization of the Unconscious*,[9] encouraged rapprochment between sociology and psychoanalysis. In Seeley's view both perspectives have immense explanatory power. Each serves to make intelligible a "vast range of otherwise disjointed and seemingly unrelated events." Seeley recognizes that both sociology and psychoanalysis are exercises in world-building, in paradigm-making, in the formulation of explanations that fit.[10]

It is important to Berger that he come to terms with psychoanalysis but he is not attracted to the syncretistic approach which is Seeley's. Psychoanalysis is both an alternate way in social inquiry (and as such a threat to sociology) *and* a post-traditional religion-surrogate (and as such a threat to Christianity). Berger, in order to keep his worldview intact, must devise an explanation of psychoanalysis within the universe of discourse which sociology lays out. If he can do this he will simultaneously "debunk one of the debunkers" of the traditional Christian worldview and so will again make sociological analysis the profane auxiliary of prophecy.

Berger sees psychoanalysis not merely as a mode of therapy but also as a big, trans-institutional phenomenon, as a potential worldview.[11] He writes:

> Psychoanalysis has become a cultural phenomenon, a way of understanding the nature of man and an ordering of human experience on the basis of this understanding. Psychoanalysis has given birth to a psychological model that has influenced society far beyond its own institutional core and the latter's fringes. ("Psychoanalysis," 27)

Further, Berger argues, psychoanalysis has had a significant influence on law, religion, and literature and on key elements of everyday life such as sexuality, marriage, and child-rearing.

Berger sees psychoanalysis as an established phenomenon, a taken-for-granted reality among college-educated Americans. He finds the basic propositions of psychoanalysis to be so well established that it is improbable that they will be questioned by any "thinking person." He writes:

> A number of root assertions of psychoanalysis have come to be taken for granted. . . . The questioning of the existence of the unconscious in a gathering of college-educated Americans is likely to be as much self-certification of derangement as questioning the germ theory of disease. (p. 28)

So Berger will again be the marginal man, the sociologically-inspired skeptic who will raise questions about things others take for granted.

Berger notes that sociology has had little to say about psychoanalysis and he dismisses in a few lines three recent attempts at socio-

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logical analysis of the phenomenon. Of Philip Rieff's *Freud: The Mind of the Moralist* Berger has only this to say: "[It] is in the main an exegetical enterprise, with some general observations on what the author calls 'the emergence of psychological man' in the concluding chapter." ("Psychoanalysis," 31) This kind of passing mention is hardly evidence of careful and empathetic reading; it reveals a certain antipathy toward the Freudian tradition.[12]

As was noted above, Berger finds considerable value in the psychological models developed by George Herbert Mead. From Mead he draws two important propositions pertinent to a sociological understanding of the psychological dimension: (1) There is a dialectical relationship between social structure and psychological reality. (2) There is, similarly, a dialectical relationship between psychological reality and any prevailing psychological model. (p. 32) The first proposition has been discussed above. Here Berger refers again to Mead's fundamental contention that self and society are inextricably interwoven.

The second proposition is a provocative extension of the first: There is also a dialectical relationship between psychological reality and the theories men construct in order to *explain* it. There is implicit here a sociology of knowledge approach to the history of psychological theories. Since human beings are apparently destined not only to experience but also to explain themselves, Berger argues, we may assume that society will provide a psychological model (in some cases possibly more than one) precisely for this purpose of self-explanation. (pp. 33f.)

It is a mark of our time and evidence of the relatively high degree of self-consciousness of contemporary man that most people employ -- at

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least in rudimentary form -- psychological models, paradigms which purport to make some sense out of seemingly random behavior and of streams of inchoate feelings. One sees evidence of this not only in the party chatter of the well-educated veterans of analysis -- "I don't want my children to see me nude because the oedipal attachment is problematic enough without that" -- but also in the conversations of the less affluent and less well-educated -- "Abby (or Joyce Brothers or whomever) says that homosexuality results from the weakness or absence of the father figure." Every time someone asks, "What do you suppose he means by that?" certain assumptions derived from psychoanalysis are involved. And, as Berger notes, John Rechy's novel *City of Night* suggests that young male prostitutes on Times Square worry about their narcissism.

There is an important function of psychological models which Berger fails to mention. Psychological models perform for many contemporary individuals the same function that theodicies performed for premoderns. Even when our forebears knew that there was nothing they could *do* about this or that natural disaster or personal tragedy, they felt better about their calamities if they could *explain* them, if they could make those bits of misfortune part of some orderly view of things. Thus: "The crops were poor because the gods are displeased." Similarly, many persons today are better able to cope with their own psychic dysfunctions if they can be contained in some conceptual apparatus. Indeed, the very term "psychic dysfunction" is a label, a conceptual tool, which makes us feel more comfortable with our anxieties and experiences of discrepancy. So: "I resent and seek to avoid responsibilities because I was the oldest of nine children and was never really allowed to have a childhood of my

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own." Or: "I am impotent because my parents taught me that sex is dirty." Or: "I shall probably never marry because my parents' divorce was so traumatic for me." And so on. Such diagnoses do not necessarily facilitate cure but they do seem somehow to make the difficulties more bearable. In other words: We employ psychological models -- with more or less sophistication -- not only as a means of correcting alleged personality defects but also as a way of coping with defects which we feel unable to correct.

Berger's failure to mention this ability of psychoanalysis to provide a theodicy-surrogate may perhaps be explained by his prior commitment to the effect that non-supernatural systems of order cannot supply effective theodicies. In any case, there is much value in Berger's contention that the psychological models we employ are themselves social products. They are created in response to felt needs and, once constructed, they give shape to feelings and self-understanding. Like every other product of the human imagination (externalization), the psychological models men invent have the potential to become persuasive, that is, *real*, in human affairs (objectivation), and, in turn, to be adopted, taken into the consciousness of individuals (internalization). Like all other mental products, psychological models operate in society as self-fulfilling prophecies. ("Psychoanalysis," 34) As in so much of his writing, here again Berger reminds us that human institutions which confront the individual as objective realities are themselves human products, that they arise in response to felt needs, that they can be revised or retired by means of new human initiative.

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From this it follows that sociological analysis might be able to locate and discuss the social developments which have contributed to the success of this or that psychological model. In particular, Berger asks, what social developments have a bearing on the popularity of the psychoanalytic model?

Berger's analysis may be summarized as follows: The fundamental structurizing force in modern society is industrialization. By rationalizing and fragmenting the processes of production, industrialization has brought about a separation of the economic aspects of life from the realm of the family. (In pre-industrial societies economic and domestic life were much more closely tied together.) There emerges a sharp distinction between the public and private spheres. In such a situation "identity" becomes a problem; the individual does not know to which of a number of roles to assign priority status. For a small percentage near the top of the occupational structure, those with "meaningful" work, it is still possible to "find one's identity" in the public sphere. But for the great masses of people in the lower and middle echelons of the occupational system, the search for the "real me" is conducted in the world away from work, that is, in the private sphere. Thus it becomes necessary to legitimate the activities in the private sphere as "decisive occasions for self-discovery." In this context sexuality, marriage, and child-rearing become the crucial tests for the discovery of identity.[13] But the private sphere has relatively few social controls and the freedom it allows the individual may become a burden. Some *structuring* of the quest for meaning becomes desirable and *this* is the need which psychotherapeutic institutions meet. (We must keep in mind that

Berger includes here not only psychoanalysis as such but also the whole testing and counseling complex which one finds in government, industry, and education.) Those psychotherapeutic institutions are best understood as "an admirably designed response to the needs of this particular socio-historical situation." (p. 38) And, Berger notes,

> Unlike some other social entities involved in the modern identity crisis (such as the churches on the one hand and political fanaticisms on the other), institutionalized psychologism straddles the dividing line between the public and the private spheres, thus occupying an unusually strategic position in our society.[14]

The psychologist, Berger notes, can help his client solve his personal problems *and* also show him how more efficiently to run any bureaucracy which might be his responsibility. The symbols of psychologism become overarching collective representations and move into the vacuum left by the perceived inadequacy of older integrating symbol systems such as those offered by the churches.

With this general explanation in mind, Berger argues, it is possible to explain some of the central tenets of psychoanalysis in terms of their social roots. The centrality of the concept of the unconscious, for example, may be seen as a function of the role confusion and complexity of institutional life. "The opaqueness of the psychological model reflects the opaqueness of the social structure as a whole." (p. 39) Similarly, he argues, the psychoanalytic focus on sexuality is consistent with the tendency of industrialized and bureaucratized modern society to locate the quest for meaning in the private sphere. The emphasis on childhood and the family situation relate to the same tendency. Finally -- and this is an argument I find very compelling -- Berger feels that the psychoanalytic perspective is attractive to moderns because it blends the

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scientific and the mystical. Psychoanalysis presents itself as the *science* of the unconscious and as a technique of rational control. At the same time it touches upon the magical and the mysterious; it looks for the "universe within the psyche." This emphasis Berger sees as an updated version of the search for the numinous experience. He offers this telling comparison: "The other world, which religion located in transcendental reality, is now introjected within human consciousness itself." (p. 41) Berger might well have added that post-Freudian psychotherapy offers a spectrum of choices in this connection. The analysand may focus on the rational, the scientific with Albert Ellis or on the mystical, the mythical with a disciple of C. G. Jung. And many intermediate blends are available as well.

In summary, then, Berger concedes that, generally speaking, the psychological dimension of social inquiry is important. It is a necessary part of an adequate philosophical anthropology and a necessary complement to sociology. *But*, he insists, particular psychological models are social products, human responses to felt needs. As such they are culturally-relative and susceptible to analysis by means of a sociology of knowledge approach. The particular psychological model that is dominant in our culture is derived from the work of Freud. Berger does not find much value in that perspective in terms of what it can teach us about "reality" but he believes that the psychoanalytic perspective is worth studying for what it can tell us about our society. Note that this is analogous to studying a religious tradition not for what it can tell us about ultimate reality but rather for what it can tell us about the people for whom that tradition is compelling.

In his critique of Freud, Berger seems almost Marxist. He insists that social inquiry must concern itself with *real* phenomena, with social structures and the ways in which they are shaped by and give shape to individual consciousness. We need not, he suggests, be very concerned with the alleged contents of some "hidden center" of the person.

IV

Berger's antipathy toward the Freudian perspective is ironic in light of the fact that many careful readers see high affinity between Berger and psychoanalysis. Berger's version of the sociology of knowledge does for society what psychoanalysis does for the individual: It reveals the origins of certain taken-for-granted patterns and thereby frees us to devise alternative patterns. Friedrichs sums up this parallel as follows:

> Through a process analogous to the way in which a psychoanalyst assists his patient in uncovering and thus understanding the compulsive routines and meanings he himself had fashioned in response to his need for security, sociologists may, through an extension of the perspective of the sociology of knowledge, portray to the layman the manner in which society -- or one of its subsystems -- routinizes its own structures and meanings in the name of "reality" or "the natural" and so subjects man to a socialized prison of his own making or, when those norms have been unselfconsciously internalized (as they are typically held to have been), to the unauthentic life of the puppet. When the genesis of a particular social compulsion, cognitive or behavioral, has been carefully and accurately described -- and understood as such -- the conditions necessary to transcend it are at hand.[15]

Other sociologists have seen this connection as well. In his highly affirmative review of *The Sacred Canopy* in the *American Sociological Review* Bryan Wilson wrote:

> There is a certain analogy between Berger's argument and Freud's. For both, man acquires self-conscious choice through the realization of the dialectic by which he creates the social world and yet needs to be socialized into it. Man sees through the myth, comes to understand the process of mystification, and then experiences *Entzauberung* [demystification]. What Berger . . . describes as "bad faith" . . . may then be eliminated. Latently, perhaps, sociology itself appears in the wings, waiting to be cast in a salvationist role, though Berger does not suggest it.[16]

It is unlikely that Berger will ever explicitly cast sociology in the role of salvation-bringer. This was Comte's mistake and the course which he advised is not permissable within the precincts of a value-free science. But several reviewers have noted the possibility of using Berger in this way and many of his most appreciative readers have thus utilized his work.

Psychoanalysis was probably more of an "in" thing when Berger wrote his essay on it than it is today. It is at least true that psychoanalysis is no longer the reigning form of "psychologism" it was in the late 50s and early 60s. Indeed, if one were today to undertake an analysis similar to Berger's, the proper focus might well be the human potential movement. But again the hard fact of pluralism confronts us. Where in the 50s and early 60s we had one dominant faith (Freudian orthodoxy) and a few reformist "denominations" (such as the Jungian and Adlerian options), today's student of contemporary psychological models is faced with a vast array of therapeutic possibilities and modes of cultural analysis. With the appearance of B. F. Skinner's widely-read book *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*, behaviorist psychology ended its long confinement in the laboratories and moved boldly into the worldview marketplace.[17] The human potential movement in its various incarnations -- from the Esalen Institute to "consciousness-raising groups" of suburban housewives -- is analogous to the radical wing of the Protestant Reformation which, in the eyes of the Lutherans and Calvinists, was marked by fanatical excesses.

Berger's essay on psychoanalysis, then, is as much a cultural product as the phenomenon he analyzed. He no longer feels the need to explain this movement -- nor to explain it away. But we should not be surprised if he, at some time in the future, subjects some other reigning psychological model to sociological scrutiny.

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Notes to Chapter 6

1. Durkheim's position is developed in *The Rules of Sociological Method*. Durkheim found value in psychology and felt that at least some sociologists should have a working knowledge of it but he did not want psychology to be seen as the master paradigm for social inquiry. On the relationship of Durkheimian sociology to psychology see Albert Salomon, "Some Aspects of the legacy of Durkheim" in Kurt H. Wolff, ed., *Essays in Sociology and Philosophy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), pp. 247ff.

2. "Towards a Sociological Understanding of Psychoanalysis," *Social Research*, Spring 1965, pp. 26ff. Hereafter: "Psychoanalysis."

3. "Marriage and the Construction of Reality," p. 22; "Reification and the Sociological Critique of Consciousness," p. 200.

4. *Invitation*, 51. See also *Vision*, 31-42 and Berger's dissertation, pp. 182f.

5. In the preface to *Invitation* (p. vii) Berger admits that " . . . among the academic diversions available today, I consider sociology as a sort of 'royal game' -- one does not invite to a chess tournament those who are incapable of playing dominos."

6. See *Mind, Self, and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934), especially part III. We should not be surprised to discover that Berger feels most at home with the psychological model which is most "sociological" and most dependent upon a commonsense version of reality. The Meadian formulation contains no hidden truths or mystical lore. Its pertinent elements are empirically available.

7. See Berger's further discussion in *Sociology*, 178f.

8. Friedrichs, *A Sociology of Sociology*, p. 329. For other sociological commentary on Freud and psychoanalysis see *American Journal of Sociology*, November 1939 (whole issue on Freud) and Hendrik Ruitenbeek, ed., *Psychoanalysis and Social Science* (New York: Dutton, 1962).

9. New York: Science House, 1967.

10. Cf. Herbert Fingarette, *The Self in Transformation* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), chapter 1.

11. A similar position is taken by Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic*. Freud, it should be noted, specifically denied that psychoanalysis is a worldview. He insisted that his new science was rather a part of the scientific worldview. See his essay "The Question of a *Weltanschauung*," chapter XXXV of *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (New York: Norton, 1965).

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12. Berger and Rieff, it should be noted, have more in common than at first meets the eye. Both construct macro-level cultural analyses in which are highlighted the decline of traditional authority, the growing importance of the private sphere, and the search for religion-surrogates. Both are pessimistic about the future and somewhat conservative in their politics. Further, both are intent upon discouraging their readers from casting them in the role of prophet or messiah. Discovery of their common interests and similar conclusions has been obscured by the fact that Rieff rooted much of his work in an exegesis of Freud. In his recent essays, however, Rieff has made clear the extent of his interest in many of the questions which are central to Berger's intellectual career. Cf. "Fellow Teachers" in *Salmagundi*, Summer-Fall 1972, pp. 5ff. and "The Impossible Culture," the introduction to Oscar Wilde, *The Soul of Man Under Socialism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970).

13. See Berger's essay in *The Human Shape of Work*. See also chapter 3, above.

14. "Psychoanalysis," 38. "Psychologism" (the term is Husserl's) is Berger's somewhat perjorative label for contemporary dependence on concepts and institutions derived from psychology.

15. Friedrichs, *A Sociology of Sociology*, p. 309.

16. *American Sociological Review*, October 1968, p. 844. A connection between Berger and Freud was also suggested in George Simpson's *ASR* (February 1967, pp. 137f.) review of *Construction*.

17. B. F. Skinner, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* (New York: Knopf, 1971). For a discussion of the work, plans, and hopes of some prominent behaviorists see Kenneth Goodall, "Shapers at Work," *Psychology Today*, November 1972, pp. 53ff. This presentation makes clear the evangelistic and priestly pretensions of the behaviorists. Berger has not, to my knowledge, written anything about Skinner but I suspect that he would be as quick to reject behaviorism (which he would see as a psychology of tyranny and "bad faith") as he is to reject psychoanalysis (which he sees as the psychology of chaos and mysticism). See also the discussion of tyranny and chaos in chapter 7, below.

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Chapter 7 THE SEARCH FOR BOUNDARIES

The Political Dimension

Men of intemperate minds cannot be
free. Their passions forge their
fetters.

Edmund Burke

Freedom is the recognition of
necessity.

Friedrich Engels

I. Sociology and politics in separate compartments. II. Competition in the worldview marketplace. III. Between tyranny and chaos. IV. Conservative humanism. V. In dialogue with the Marxists. VI. Sociology and freedom. VII. On issues. VIII. Ironic perspective and political stance.

I

Peter Berger, as we have seen again and again, insists on separating value-free science from other tasks -- especially theology and politics. This concern is admirable and sometimes helpful, yet it is clear that his political writings are informed by what social scientific inquiry has taught him. Further, these writings are important "windows on his soul"; they show us something of the practical pay-off of sociological theorizing. Let us acknowledge, therefore, that Berger's political writings are indeed something other than sociological theory. But let us also acknowledge that lessons learned elsewhere influence these writings and that important clues to the author's priorities are to be found in them.

In his ongoing concern to separate objective social inquiry from partisan dispute, Berger is following in the footsteps of Max Weber. Weber offered this summary of the matter:

> To take a practical political stand is one thing, and to analyze political structures and party positions is another. When speaking in a political meeting about democracy, one does not hide one's personal standpoint. Indeed, to come out clearly and take a stand is one's damned duty. The words one uses in such a meeting are not means of scientific analysis but means of canvassing votes and winning over others. They are not plowshares to loosen the soil of contemplative thought; they are swords against the enemies: such words are weapons. It would be an outrage, however, to use words in this fashion in a lecture or in the lecture room.[1]

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Like Weber, Berger cares very much about the political situation in which he lives. But -- again following Weber -- Berger is committed to the rigorous separation of social scientific inquiry and partisan political statements. Thus all of his political pronouncements are to be found in popular periodicals and in his essay in *Movement and Revolution* -- carefully isolated from his writing as a professional sociologist.

Berger's attempt thus to compartmentalize -- to separate as well as he can his value-free sociological inquiry from his value-laden judgments about contemporary affairs -- invites two levels of response. (1) Because of the fervor and volume with which intellectuals have debated in recent years the question of the place of values in the life of the mind -- which debate has been perhaps most vorciferous in the social sciences -- we are apt to think first of that debate and therefore to focus on the permissability or impermissability of Berger's use of the tactic of compartmentalization. As interesting as this question is, it is beyond the scope of this study and so will not be engaged here.

(2) There is, however, another response which Berger's tendency to compartmentalize might evoke. We could receive the fact of the compartmentalization and particular acts of compartmentalization *as data* -- as clues to the writer's priorities which may help unlock for us the meaning of what he has written. Such a procedure, I would contend, can be as fruitful as the "values debate" is futile. Therefore, I shall not castigate Berger for his insistence upon the possibility of one's doing value-free inquiry nor shall I praise him for it. Rather, I shall use Berger's choices of what to write where as clues to his understanding of these matters and as pegs on which to hang an interpretation of his career.

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II

We have earlier explored Berger's conviction that in the pluralistic situation of modern Western society certain secular religion-surrogates have emerged as alternative ways of worldview-construction. Traditional religions must now do battle with a whole host of secular worldviews in order to retain the allegiance of modern man. Berger has given considerable professional attention to a number of these religion-surrogates. His essays on psychoanalysis, on marriage, on the counter culture, on violence in American society,all reflect the author's awareness that these phenomena are alternate locations of meaning and commitment for persons left adrift in the wake of the breakdown of Christendom.

Despite the large number and great variety of these secular alternatives, they all seem to fit, for Berger, into one of two categories. There are (1) political messianisms with the attendant tendency toward tyranny and (2) psychological messianisms with the attendant tendency toward the chaos of untrammeled individualism. For Berger the political option is personified by Marx and the psychological finds incarnation in Freud.[2] In Berger's view both of these secular versions of the salvific scheme go beyond the empirically-available data. In addition, he believes that both are quite dangerous. While many other twentieth century intellectuals have sought to synthesize the work of Marx and Freud, Berger has sought to steer a path between them.

Berger's earliest writings gave few clues that their author felt with very much urgency that the study of the contemporary religious situation might involve the study of secular paths to something like salvation. But by the end of his *second* look at religion, the one based in the sociology of knowledge, Berger began to give hints of an emerging inte-

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rest in non-supernatural ways of coping with the challenges of modern life. An alert reviewer, Bryan Wilson, noted this development almost before it happened. He ended his comments on *The Sacred Canopy* thus:

> Lightly, toward the close, Berger avers that religious sybolism has ceased to provide the overarching values for American society, even, one may suppose, in the nationalistic Herbergian sense. The door now seems ajar for a new theory of social cohesion.[3]

Berger, at that point, having offered his "elements for a sociolgical theory of religion," was beset by two concerns. (1) He was troubled by the fact that his "methodological atheism" might be taken as a counsel of despair by believers, as an argument in support of atheism as such. This concern was met in ~~the~~ writing of Appendix II of *Canopy* and in the extended theological essay *A Rumor of Angels*. (2) The second concern is implied in Wilson's comment, namely, the concern to talk in more depth about the question "What holds society together?" With this question firmly in mind -- and armed with the recognition that in the modern pluralistic situation non-supernaturalistic systems of order might be studied as competitors of traditional religion -- Berger began to devote himself to writing about political and cultural movements.

As has been discussed above, total interpretations of reality necessarily include interpretations of alternate systems. With this insight in mind it is possible for us better to understand the interrelationships among three subjects to which Berger has devoted considerable energy since 1965, namely, theological models, psychological models, and political models.

It will be recalled that *Canopy* was a study of secularization, the process by which the hegemony of traditional religious symbolism had been

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broken and through which the pluralism of the contemporary situation had been made manifest. In chapter 5 I discussed Berger's own response to the challenge of secularization, namely, the beginnings of a chastened theological formulation that takes into account the findings of historical scholarship and sociological inquiry. But Berger knows that to keep his worldview intact he must have explanations for alternate worldviews. So he devotes considerable energy to critiques of various psychological and political alternatives to the worldview he had laid out. Chapter 6 of this study dealt with his response to those secular worldviews grounded in the psychological; the present chapter will address his critique of the political alternatives.

III

An important resource for our inquiry into these matters is the book *Movement and Revolution* (1970). That volume contains Berger's most extensive (74 pages) political essay and an essay of about twice that length by Richard John Neuhaus, a Lutheran clergyman whose views of most political questions are substantially to the left of Berger's. Berger and Neuhaus are personal friends who have many times discussed the issues they address together in the book.[4] They are convinced that fruitful debate is still possible between conservative and radical in America -- though they note that, pushed far enough, their differences could put them on opposite sides of the barricades.

Berger's contribution to the dialogue is entitled "Between System and Horde." This title is quite similar to the title he gave to a very

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revealing political essay which he wrote for the *Christian Century* in 1968: "Between Tyranny and Chaos."[5] In that essay Berger argued that

> Tyranny and chaos are not polar opposites but rather stand in a symbiotic relationship to one another; that is, they are deeply related and feed on each other. (p. 1365) . . . Tyranny and chaos must be fought together and simultaneously. To fight only one at any given moment is to foster the other. What this means for us today is plain: we must oppose the war and the specter of domestic tyranny -- *without* becoming "radicalized" in the process. We must oppose anarchy and the cult of violence wherever these manifest themselves -- *without* transforming the call for "law and order" into a call for a police state. No easy stance to adopt. But great moral challenges have never been easy, and the stakes in this particular challenge are very high indeed. (p. 1369)

The *Christian Century* article is interesting not only in that it anticipates elements of the argument of "Between System and Horde" but also because of two elements in its argument which do not appear in the later essay. (1) When he writes for the *Christian Century*, Berger is concerned to single out what he understands to be particular *Christian* responsibilities. Thus he opens his argument with the assertion that the first duty of a Christian is to see things clearly and to keep a sober head. He continues:

> Yes, this is the duty of every reasonable man. But I see it as a specifically Christian duty because religion, insofar as it has any political benefits, should give an individual the wider perspective and the inner detachment that keep him from being swept off his feet by every wave of current events. Whatever else a Christian may be, he ought not to be a man who lustily shouts the latest slogans. (p. 1365)

Berger closes the same essay by reminding his readers that Christian faith assumes that the world is in the process of being redeemed. It is the duty of the Christian, he argues, to decide what acts he can perform which will signal that redemption is in progress. Such acts will constitute a *Christian interposition* between the forces of tyranny and

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the forces of chaos. This "Christian footnote" to an article which is in so many ways similar to "Between System and Horde" is especially interesting in light of the fact that, in the later essay, Berger writes:

> I am a Christian and I am a conservative, but my conservatism does not derive from my Christianity, indeed would remain the same even if I were not a Christian (and *did* remain the same during a period of my life when I did not consider myself a Christian). Christianity, however, makes pessimism about human affairs easier to bear. This incidentally is an argument for *neither* Christianity *nor* conservatism, but it is a point that should be mentioned here.[6]

(2) The *Christian Century* article also contains some comments on the place of the churches in the political struggle of our time. Included here is a reversal of Berger's earlier criticisms of the social functionality of institutional religion. In *Vision* and especially in *Noise* he had been highly critical of the tendency of the churches to underwrite the social status quo. But in the intervening years, he argues, two signigicant changes have occurred. First, through their involvement in the civil rights and anti-war movements, many churchmen have moved from a passive to an active interpretation of this "civic religion" function of the churches. The second change has to do with our understanding of the social order that surrounds us. Berger's summary of this concern is very revealing:

> Around 1960 American society still seemed a massive and massively stable structure. Today one has the feeling that the whole structure may come tumbling down at any moment; that even our most basic values are tottering. Hence a new vision of the role of the churches. They may now be seen as one of the few bulwarks against the collapse of what has been most precious and most humane in American civilization. (pp. 1369ff.)

The churches, then, are obligated to interpose themselves between the forces of tyranny and the forces of chaos not only because they claim to embody the gospel of Jesus of Nazareth but also because of their historic

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character as "civic religion."

IV

Berger does not shrink from referring to himself as a conservative and even a reactionary. Indeed, he believes that the great majority of people in most human societies is conservative.[7] *But* he believes that the meanings of terms such as *conservative* and *liberal* have become obscured in recent political debate. His is a complex and compassionate kind of conservatism and he gives considerable space to outlining the principal points of what he calls "conservative humanism."

There are, in Berger's view, two kinds of conservatives, those who are pleased with the status quo and desire its preservation *and* those who are deeply suspicious of any possible *alternative* to the status quo. (*Movement*, 21) Berger's conservatism is of this second sort; he elsewhere calls this "the conservatism of the pessimist."[8] This is a conservatism which issues from the relentless application of critical intelligence to the phenomena about which one thinks. The sociological imagination reveals to us the limitations of every element of the status quo. But the same kind of inquiry can and should be turned upon every reformist scheme, every alternative to the existing order. If this is done, the limitations of the new plan will become as apparent as those of the status quo. And since the process of change is itself somewhat unsettling, Berger can support this proposition: Other things being equal, let society remain the way it is.[9]

This concern is to be found throughout the Berger corpus. In *Invitation* he writes:

> The unrespectable motif of sociological consciousness need not imply a revolutionary attitude. We would even go further than that and express the opinion that sociological understanding is inimical to revolutionary ideologies, not because it has some sort of conservative bias, but because it sees not only through the illusions of the present status quo but also through the illusionary expectations concerning possible futures, such expectations being the customary spiritual nourishment of the revolutionary. (p. 47)

The same concern is reflected in *Rumor* in connection with the theme "relativizing the relativizers."

For Berger the conservative posture is undergirded not by our dreams and hopes for the future but by the empirical realities of our history. While the radical welcomes the age of discontinuity as an age of new possibilities, the conservative is inclined to anticipate the future as more of the same. And while the radical is apt to understand history as a pageant of progress, Berger gives voice to the conservative's very different interpretation:

> . . . all of history is one endless massacre, stretching back to the dawn of mankind. Wherever we are in history, we stand on a mountain of corpses -- and, however terrible the thought, we are the beneficiaries of all this carnage. (*Movement*, 56f.)

In this context Berger lays out some of the basic elements of conservative humanism: A conservative accepts the messiness of history and is suspicious of the idea of progress. He is skeptical of innovation -- and doubly skeptical of violent innovation. He accepts human beings as they are and so is deeply suspicious of all programs that presuppose or promise a "new man." A conservative values order, continuity, and triviality in social life. He is skeptical of political movements because he knows that they are better at tearing things down than at bringing about lasting improvement in the quality of human life.

Berger, then, considers himself a political conservative and yet he often takes what one usually understands to be a "liberal" stance on the questions of racial justice and the war in Vietnam. He makes it clear that his conservative humanism "has little affinity with much that goes under the name of 'conservatism' in America today." (*Movement*, 28f.) As a case in point, Berger is repelled by the simplistic glorification of Americanism and by blind faith in the superiority of capitalism. Beyond this he writes:

> I carry no brief for conservatism in religion, in morality, or in esthetics, and I see no contradiction whatever between my "radicalism" in some of these areas and my conservative predispositions in the socio-political sphere. (*Movement*, 22)

Berger, then, is a "maverick" conservative. He manifests the consistency of his debunking posture in his willingness to be as critical of conservatives as he is of liberals and radicals. His recent article in the *National Review* (May 12, 1972) is a case in point. He begins by identifying himself as a conservative but then moves immediately to record his reservations.

> Time and again, suffocated by the insipid orthodoxies of the liberal Establishment or nauseated by the noisier dementias that have sprouted to its left, I have picked up the *National Review* with the pleasure of discovering healthy sin in a conclave of puritans. And yet, time and again, the initial pleasure was replaced by acute disappointment. (p. 507)

Then Berger goes on to name and discuss the "two paradoxes" of American conservatism, the one theoretical and the other moral. The first paradox he sums up as follows:

> If conservatism has any root meaning, it is that of wanting to preserve the existing order of things. But the existing order of things in America is profoundly liberal, institutionally as well as ideologically. Thus the intellectual conservative in America, deeply critical of liberal ideology as he is, finds himself in the position of standing for the preservation of an order based on all those principles which offend him. (p. 508)

The second paradox consists in what Berger calls the moral myopia of conservatives. Conservatives, Berger argues, are quick to denounce the murders and atrocities of "the other side" but they habitually overlook similar behavior by people who are on "our side." The credibility of conservatives suffers when this kind of doublethink is employed. Berger calls for consistency, for an end to the notion that "one side's atrocities are the *Realpolitik* of the other."[10]

The essential quality of Berger's conservative humanism is the priority of the category of order. Order, the fundamental political category in the West since Plato,[11] is an important element of Berger's social theory. Chapter 1 of *The Sacred Canopy* (as we have seen) is essentially an essay on the importance of order and the things men do to secure it. In Berger's words: "The socially constructed world is, above all, an ordering experience." (*Canopy*, 19) The essay in *Movement and Revolution* may be read as an extended, timely footnote on the first chapter of *Canopy*. In *Rumor*, we recall, order appears as the pre-eminent signal of transcendence. And Berger's concern with the problem of order has been evident in his political writings of the last few years.

Berger is convinced that permanent revolution -- the professed goal of both Richard Nixon and Mao Tse Tung -- is not possible. Such an experience would be unbearable. Without a stable context, without predictable structures, social life is not possible. This conviction leads

Berger to be very suspicious of any rhetoric which suggests that continued upheaval is desirable.[12] Here again Berger's dependence upon Gehlen is apparent. Only because we have a stable, taken-for-granted background can we experiment and innovate in the foreground.

In the context of his concern for order Berger can make a defense of necessary bureaucracies. Like Weber, Berger sees bureaucratic organization as one of the hallmarks of our age and although he is willing to acknowledge that there is something very healthy about the anti-bureaucratic animus of our youth, he is quick to remind his readers that bureaucracies are necessary if we are to enjoy many of the comforts which we take for granted.

> The critics of bureaucracy generally think about the Pentagon or, at best, the Registrar's Office. They habitually overlook the fact that food supply, garbage collection, and basic utilities also require bureaucratic administrations which actually are not all that different in appearance from those of the military or the educational establishment. (*Movement*, 36)

Ironically, one of the bureaucracies Berger is now prepared to defend is the institutional church. We have already seen how the iconoclastic author of *Vision* and *Noise* had managed a few kind words for the churches -- even if only as purveyors of "civic religion" -- in the essay "Between Tyranny and Chaos." In his recent address delivered to the Tenth Plenary of the Consultation on Church Union (COCU) he goes further:

> Every enduring human enterprise must exist in institutional structures, and the enterprise of the Christian community is no exception. What is more, anyone concerned for the institutional structures of the American church must ipso facto concern himself with the existing denominations and their relations to each other. What I have to say, therefore, in no way disparages the interests that have been associated with COCU or even the (let us say) less than charismatic processes by which these interests have of necessity been expressed. I would even express the rather unfashionable opinion that there are occasions when bureaucratic organizations may be vehicles of grace.[13]

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In fairness to Berger it should be noted that the remarks to the COCU delegates stand in a certain continuity with his early church renewal writings. Now as then, he is critical of accomodationism and faddism. He is opposed to the church's following various prophets and alleged profits of "relevance." In the 1950s, he had argued, the churches gave themselves rather uncritically to "pastoral theology" and to the family-centered ethos of the American suburb. Today, in his view, the churches are again succumbing to cultural accomodationism in their embrace of the counter culture and the themes of radical politics. Such fad-following is unacceptable for Berger; in his view the church's basic message is always essentially the same.

In light of his concern for order and in light of his critical appraisal of the pretensions of most reformist and revolutionary movements, Berger can find little of value in talk of revolution. The power of his language makes clear the depth of his commitment at this point:

> When I hear some pretty coed start talking about the revolution *I* think of dead Algerian children -- I know very well that *she* is thinking of something else, something great and noble and immaculate. (*Movement*, 60)

Some of the revolution talk, Berger will concede, is a product of compassion. But, he writes,

> *Most of it* . . . is self-indulgence and unseriousness. It is not so much motivated by sympathy with black people in slums and yellow people in rice paddies as by boredom with Connecticut. (*Movement*, 60)

Berger is deeply offended by the glibness of the revolution talk which surrounds him and by what he perceives to be the unseriousness of the young and not so young who walk beneath revolutionary banners. Revolution is serious business.

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> When it comes to revolutionaries, only trust the sad ones. The enthusiastic ones are the oppressors of tomorrow -- or else they are only kidding. (*Movement*, 19)

Some readers will no doubt believe that Berger is too much the literalist. Perhaps he takes the young "revolutionaries" with more seriousness than they take themselves. But his *angst* about the matter clearly runs deep and the language he uses to discuss these matters is personal and powerful.

If the urgency of Berger's critiques of revolution talk is rather new, his concern about these matters is not. Nearly a decade before *Movement and Revolution* Berger referred to humor as redemptive, as a signal of transcendence. Then he noted:

> The revolutionary is almost always a thoroughly humorless type. He sees people as part of structures, either those he wishes to tear down or those he hopes to erect. Those who defend the status quo appear to him as fools or scoundrels. Revolution is an earnest undertaking. The revolutionary takes it and himself with very great seriousness. (*Vision*, 214)

V

Berger's feelings about revolution and revolutionaries are at least in part a function of his concern with Marx and Marxists. Berger tells his students that Max Weber's whole career may be interpreted as an attempt to prove Marx wrong. Despite his appreciation of Marx's work (noted above), Berger's own career sometimes appears to be marked by the same concern.

One of Berger's recent editorial projects reflects his interest in Marxist thought. Berger collected essays by prominent Eastern European sociologists and social philosophers for a special issue of *Social Research*, the quarterly journal of the New School for Social Research.[14] The essays were published in book form under the title *Marxism and Sociology* in 1969. Unlike his earlier collection on the sociology of occupations, this volume does not contain an essay by Berger nor does it have a clear theme or "message."

Berger clearly sees this kind of exchange between Eastern and Western intellectuals as highly significant not only for those of us who are in the academy but also for the sake of the well-being of people living in a world in which the tensions between East and West constantly threaten the peace. Indeed, one has the feeling that for Berger a dialogue between Western and Marxist sociology is perhaps more important than the Christian-Marxist dialogue to which so many Christian intellectuals have given their energies in recent years.[15] But such a cross-cultural exchange, in Berger's view, ought not begin with polemics. It is better, he feels, to begin with questions that are less timely and politically-devisive and to come later to the discussion of more emotionally-charged issues. The papers in *Marxism and Sociology* were chosen on the basis of their being theoretically interesting, not on their ability to be ideologically provocative.

Berger's own contribution to the dialogue between Marxist and non-Marxist sociology is the 1965 article "Reification and the Sociological Critique of Consciousness." In this essay he attempts to combine some elements of his own Meadian social psychology with certain essential Marxist tenets. Berger addresses himself to the question of the distance man feels from the products of his own labor. He offers names for sev-

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eral levels of this process. *Objectivation* is the process by which human subjectivity embodies itself in products that are then available to oneself and to others as elements of a common world that is "real." *Objectification* is the process by which man establishes distance from his own producing activity. He now perceives what he has made as an object which is distinct from himself. *Alienation* is the process by which "man forgets that the world he lives in has been produced by himself." Now the unity of the producer and the product is broken. *Reification* is that moment in the process of alienation in which the characteristic of thing-hood becomes the standard of objective reality. In Berger's words: "Reification is objectification in an alienated mode." (p. 200)

Berger clearly shares with Marx a commitment to the desirability of making men conscious of the fact that they -- or their predecessors -- are the creators of the social world in which they live. Indeed, in both *Vision* and *Invitation* Berger manifests something of a passion -- and perhaps a genius -- for what the Marxists call "demystification." But to his sequence of steps in the process by which man is alienated from his labor Berger has some interpretive comments to add. In Berger's view objectivation and objectification are anthropologically necessary. Man is required by his nature to externalize meanings, to watch them become empirically-available to others in a shared world which he has altered (objectivation), and to come to perceive what he has made as an object which is other than himself (objectification). These things we must do. But alienation and reification are *not* anthropologically necessary. Berger agrees with Marx that these latter qualities need not stain the human situation. But in fact, they do. And the fact that they do --

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so persistently and so universally -- becomes for Berger an important datum to be analyzed. He does not dismiss them as illogical nor does he simply label them "the enemy." Acknowledging that, for example, reification is a social product, Berger goes on to explore the possible social functionality of reification. He concludes that reification is made necessary by some of the "fundamental terrors of human existence." So great is our fear of chaos that only the fabrication of a very firm order of "reality" can calm us. And if we are to remain calm, we shall probably have to forget the very human origin of that order. Perhaps exercises in alienation are the only means we have for coming to terms with the terror of chaos and death. Reification, then, is not an element of our anthropological givenness. But we do demand a tight web of hard social facts as a context for meaningful individual existence. Thus a solid order [illegible]e sort one might well describe as "reified" seems to be part of the human condition in some rather permanent way.[16]

VI

In Berger's view, Marxists are to be found not only in the Soviet academy but also in the intellectual world of the West, even -- perhaps especially -- in sociology. Among those "radical sociologists" who became vocal and visible in the 60s there were some who quoted Peter Berger with approval and who saw him as an intellectual source for their insurgency. It was from *Invitation to Sociology* that the radical sociologists lifted most of their favorite Bergerian aphorisms and ideas. They liked his emphasis on the debunking motif and on the unrespectability of the sociological enterprise. They read *Invitation to Sociology* as an invitation to consciousness-raising. *The Social Construction of Reality* also had considerable impact. In the words of Dennis Wrong:

> *The Social Construction of Reality* is really almost a sacred text among students because they think that if reality can be constructed, it can be reconstructed.[17]

But Berger was not comfortable with the enthusiasm with which he was being quoted among the radical sociologists and among the radical young in general. The high visibility of the various radical caucuses at the 1969 meeting of the American Sociological Association in San Francisco seems to have had the effect of crystallizing in Berger the need to comment. He was not angry nor was he threatened by the various radical versions of sociology; indeed, his tone suggests bemused detachment:

> Amid this novel furor, the majority, almost furtively, went about its usual business of interviewing job candidates, drinking publisher's liquor, and reading papers in atrocious English.[18]

In a short paper entitled "Sociology and Freedom" Berger laid out a balanced account of his understanding of the extent to which sociology can be a liberating discipline. Put differently, Berger here addresses the question of the extent to which sociology can be used as a foundation for revolution. In this essay he gives explicit expression to the understanding of sociology which has been implicit in so much of his writing.

He approaches the question by way of two seemingly contradictory propositions: (1) Sociology is subversive of established patterns of thought. (2) Sociology is conservative in its implications for the social order. Both positions, he insists, are correct. Either without the other is incomplete and therefore incorrect. Again Berger seeks his place between polar opposites. He must stand between tyranny and chaos, between system and horde, and between sociology as conservative and sociology as subversive.

It is of interest to note that Berger speaks *first* about the subversive qualities of sociology. The implicit message here is that sociology "begins" by placing the institutional order and its legitimating thought patterns under critical scrutiny with the result that the fictitious nature of much that we take for granted becomes apparent. The knowledge that results from such inquiry can be liberating but there are also risks involved.

> Anyone who pursues the sociological perspective to its logical consequences will find himself undergoing a transformation of his consciousness of society. At least potentially, this makes him unsafe in the eyes of the guardians of law and order. It also produces unsafety, sometimes with catastrophic effects, for his own peace of mind. . . . If there is a relationship between "bringing to consciousness" and the ecstasy of liberation, there is also a relationship between that ecstasy and the possibility of desparation. Toward the end of his life Max Weber was asked by a friend to whom he had been explaining the very pessimistic conclusions of his sociological analysis, "But, if you think this way, why do you continue doing sociology?" Weber's reply is one of the most chilling statements I know in the history of Western thought: "Because I want to know how much I can stand." ("Freedom," 2f.)

Sociology, in Berger's understanding, must not stop with the critique of the established order. It must go on to suggest three "imperatives" which are present in every human society. They are the imperatives of order, of continuity, and of triviality.

The same sociological imagination which has shown us the fictitious quality and the precarious stance of the social order also teaches us that a considerable measure of order is necessary for our well-being. The sociologist who learns *both* of the lessons that sociology has to teach is apt to be, in Berger's view, one who thinks daringly but acts

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cautiously. Once again a debunker has been debunked. The sociological imagination is an acid no bottle can contain. It cannot lend itself to the construction of new normative systems because, if it is true to itself, it turns immediately to the criticism of the new structures. Sociology examines everything but it is reluctant to change anything.

What does all this mean for the discipline of sociology -- and for the sociologist?

> The *discipline of sociology*, I insist as emphatically as I can, must be value-free -- however difficult this may be in some situations. The moment the discipline ceases to be value-free in principle, it ceases to be a science and becomes nothing but ideology, propaganda, and a part of the instrumentarium of political manipulation. The *practicioner of the discipline*, the sociologist -- a living human being -- must *not* be value-free. The moment he is, he betrays his humanity and (in an operation that can simultaneously be called "false consciousness" and "bad faith") transforms himself into a ghostly embodiment of abstract science. ("Freedom," 5)

It is the sociologist as an individual who is responsible for the uses to which his science is put. This is a moral burden that the individual cannot lay down but it is also one which sociology, the discipline as a whole, cannot take up for the individual practitioner. Further, the sociologist, in Berger's view, has no doctrine of salvation to bring into the political arena. Indeed, says Berger, if a sociologist should happen to be a member of a revolutionary movement, "his most important contribution to it will be his ongoing critique *of it*."(p. 5) The failure of the radical sociologists, Berger insists, is not that they care about consciousness-raising but that they do not do enough of it. He closes this essay by acknowledging that his view of the matter is a difficult and lonely one. This complex version of the relationship between sociology and freedom does not appeal either to those who want a career in the establishment nor to those who see themselves as messianic figures.

VII

Political matters, in Berger's view, are problems not so much of theory as of compassion. The unfortunate dimensions of the human experience he sees not as intellectual failure but as moral failure. Indeed, abstraction and theory-building often serve to separate the thinker from real human problems.

Compassion is the primary moral category which emerges in Berger's political writings. Although compassion is never postulated as a universal, it is, nevertheless, this quality which Berger believes he has in common with those with whom he enters into dialogue.

It is on the basis of compassion directed by reason and the sociological imagination rather than political ideology that Berger has guided as he offers his positions on some of the key issues of the day. The Vietnam War must end not because it is imperialistic but because it is murderous. Blacks should be afforded the right of full participation in American society not for the purpose of making revolution but simply because they have been and are being deprived. On such issues the conservative humanist stands with his more liberal and radical friends not because he shares their political philosophies but because he shares their concern that there be a little less suffering in the world.

But on another important question of the day, the future of the university, Berger has considerably less sympathy with his liberal and radical friends. Berger sees the university as one of the most humane and benign bureaucracies on the American scene. It is threatened by twin dangers analogous once again to tyranny and chaos. On the one hand there is the political establishment demanding that the university produce trained professionals who can efficiently perform the jobs that must be

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done. On the other hand, the students demand that the university be "relevant" to their needs -- political and psychological -- even if this means an abandonment of existing structures and of value-free inquiry. (*Movement*, 76-80)

Much of the agitation among the students Berger sees as a function of the failure of the young revolutionaries to initiate substantial change in the larger society. The student's response to the discovery of his political impotence leads him to commit himself to a pseudo-revolutionary drama on the university campus. To Berger this is similar to a man who takes out his resentments against his employer by going home and beating his wife.

But Berger does not expect the radical posturings of the students to have very much effect on the society as a whole. In his oft-quoted article "The Blueing of America"[19] he suggests that if large numbers of young people drop out of the occupational structure of this society, their places will simply be taken by the upwardly-mobile aspirants which the non-elite schools will produce.

> Far from "greening" America, the alleged revolution will serve to strengthen the vitality of the technological society against which it is directed and will further the interests of precisely those social strata that are least touched by its currently celebrated transformations of consciousness.

Or, as Berger has written elsewhere: "If 75 per cent of the American people attained Consciousness III, the other 25 per cent would run the society."[20]

Berger, then, is opposed to the so-called counter culture in both its forms; he resists both the Marxists and the mystics. In the rhetoric of the militant revolutionary he hears hints of the tyrannical. In the

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drop-out mentality he sees signaled the chaos of individualism with resulting threats to the social order.

VIII

One learns from a close reading of Berger's political writings that the ironic perspective can lead to political quietism, to conservatism. But perhaps the same ironic perspective can also lead to an activism which is not messianic. Reinhold Niebuhr can be pointed to as one who took such a stance. Niebuhr's restrained reformism pressed for change in the world of political structures without his ever believing that he and his friends would create the Kingdom of God on earth. Niebuhr, like Berger, viewed Christianity as the antidote which makes it impossible for one ever to see a particular social order or political scheme as flawless, as tending toward the "salvation" of mankind. But Neibuhr was willing to tinker more boldly with the political and economic order. One wonders if this difference might not be traced back to their respective religious heritages. Niebuhr, the Calvinist, is a bit more apt than Berger, the Lutheran, to try to *approximate* the Kingdom of God on earth.

It should be noted that there are important similarities between Berger's and Niebuhr's positions on many issues and Berger clearly has great respect for Niebuhr. But Niebuhr seems to have taken more liberal stances on many issues and his career suggests that perhaps a case could be made for a political style somewhat more "leftish" than Berger's which would still refuse to be taken in by prefabricated messianisms and unrealistic hopes. Niebuhr's caution and pragmatism might be a useful

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guide here: Involve yourself despite your awareness that things won't work out perfectly -- and don't be dismayed when they don't.

Berger is a good corrective on "revolutionists" and he can, as such, be an important part of the chastened social change dialogue which must go on in the 70s. But I suspect that many will join me in seeing Berger's position alone as inadequate. There is no constructive element, no real provision for politics as we know it, no room for change. He commits himself with a passion only in those cases where moral ambiguity is absent. And unfortunately history provides us with relatively few of these. Martin Marty has understood this and given it concise expression as follows:

> Berger's approach is great as a kind of quality control when there is a movement. But left to itself, his non-program, let-everything-be-what-it-is philosophy leaves a vacuum filled by overpowering forces of non-change. He is full of compassion, but it is a compassion that usually will have to remain in the world of the victims if no one is pushing a program or forging a movement.[21]

Notes to Chapter 7

1. "Science as a Vocation," in *From Max Weber*, p. 145.

2. Berger's critique of Freud and the Freudians was discussed in chapter 6. His ongoing argument with Marx and the Marxists will be treated in the present chapter.

3. *American Sociological Review*, October 1968, p. 845.

4. Since January 1972 Berger and Neuhaus have been associate editors of *Worldview*, a monthly journal published by the Council on Religion and International Affairs.

5. *Christian Century*, October 30, 1968, pp. 1365ff. Hereafter: "Tyranny."

6. *Movement and Revolution*, with Richard John Neuhaus (Garden City: Doubleday, 1970), p. 22. Berger has revealed in conversation that the period when he did not consider himself a Christian was a time during his Hartford sojourn when he found his own beliefs to stand in such contrast to those of the church that he felt somehow outside the fold.

7. See "Conservative Reference on Vietnam," *Christianity and Crisis*, March 6, 1967, pp. 33ff.; "Tyranny," p. 1365; and "Two Paradoxes," *National Review*, May 12, 1972, p. 507. For a critique of the conservatism implicit in *The Social Construction of Reality* see Ivan H. Light, "The Social Construction of Uncertainty," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, XIV (1969), pp. 189ff.

8. "Sociology and Freedom," p. 4. Hereafter: "Freedom."

9. *Movement*, 20. Berger's article "The Assault on Class" (with Brigitte Berger, *Worldview*, July 1972, pp. 20ff.) reflects his "pessimistic conservatism." There he argues that much of the present concern with alleged racism which is fashionable among liberals and radicals is, in fact, part of an assault on the class structure. The class structure, he insists, despite its inhumane aspects, ought to be preserved as a necessary bulwark against big government. In this context Berger develops an argument against busing school children to achieve racial integration. He affirms one's right to pass along class privileges to one's children -- while saying nothing about the rights of poor children. He assumes that economic growth in the whole society is necessary if there is to be improvement in the plight of the have-nots; he does not entertain the possibility of the redistribution of wealth. He closes the essay with a clear statement of moral purpose.

10. "Two Paradoxes," p. 510. For further discussion of this matter see Paul Craig Roberts, "The Two-faced morality," *Colorado Quarterly*, 22:2 (Autumn 1971).

11. Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, chapter 2.

12. Cf. "Freedom," p. 3 and "Tyranny."

13. "A Call to Authority in the Christian Community," p. 1263.

14. *Social Research*, 34:3 (Fall 1967). Berger was editor of *Social Research*, 1965-1970.

15. Here again we find implicit acknowledgement that Western and Marxist sociology are competing worldviews and must engage one another as such.

16. The ease with which even a theoretical discussion can be turned into something approaching an ideological dispute is reflected in the comments on Berger's essay offered by Soviet sociologist Igor S. Kon (in his article "The Concept of Alienation in Modern Sociology" in Berger, ed., *Marxism and Sociology*). Kon appreciates Berger's clear analysis of the process which leads to reification but, he insists, it is also necessary that we devote ourselves to an understanding of the means by which dereification may be brought about. Revolution, of course, is one means by which this can happen. The demolition of existing institutions makes it clear that these institutions were products of human activity. Collision with an alien culture can have the same effect. De-reification is also seen as being typical of those individuals and groups that are in a state of social marginality. But beyond his listing of alternatives to reification Kon cannot resist going on to ask if there might not be some social group which can be counted on to deal effectively with reification. One sees here the shadows of the virtuous proletariat, the class struggle, and all the rest.

17. Dennis Wrong, "Perspectives on the Therapeutic in the Context of Contemporary Sociology" (with Benjamin Nelson), *Salmagundi*, Summer-Fall 1972, p. 188.

18. "Freedom," p. 1.

19. "The Blueing of America" (with Brigitte Berger), *New Republic*, April 3, 1971.

20. "The Liberal as the Fall Guy," p. 45.

21. Marty in *National Catholic Reporter*, March 4, 1970.

Chapter 8 THE PARADIGMATIC CAREER

Overview and Appraisal of Berger's Career

> Nobody knew exactly what was on the way; nobody was able to say whether it was to be a new art, a New Man, a new morality or perhaps a re-shuffling of society. So everyone made of it what he liked.
>
> Robert Musil

I. The modern consciousness. II. Looking back. III. Looking ahead. IV. Explaining Berger's success.

I

At the time of this writing Peter Berger has just completed and sent to a publisher a manuscript of a study of modernization. The study, provocatively entitled *The Homeless Mind*,[1] addresses itself to the impact of industrialization on Third World societies. At first glance one might wonder what such an academic endeavor has to do with the rest of Berger's career. But, in fact, Berger's interest in this problem and its connection with his other professional concerns was signaled in the final paragraph of *The Sacred Canopy*.

> It would take us too far afield to discuss even briefly the problems posed by secularization for non-Western religions. Suffice it to emphasize once more that modernization is today a worldwide phenomenon and that the structures of modern industrial society, despite great modifications in different areas and national cultures, produce remarkably similar situations for the religious traditions and the institutions that embody these. Indeed, because of this the experience of the Western religious traditions in modern times is of great interest if one wishes to project the future of religion in non-Western countries, regardless of whether their development takes place under socialist or non-socialist political auspices. It would be foolhardy to make detailed predictions regarding this future in any particular country. All the same, it is safe to predict that the future of religion everywhere will be decisively shaped by the forces that have been discussed in this and the preceding chapters -- secularization, pluralization, and "subjectivization" -- and by the manner in which the several religious institutions will react to these.

The study of modernization in the Third World, then, is continuous with Berger's studies of the relationships between macro-level change and individual consciousness in contemporary Western society. Those same forces which earlier transformed the shape of social life in the West

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are now at work in other parts of the world. Sociology, which came into existence to explore the breakdown of the univocal worldview in the West, is well-equipped to devote itself to the explanation of the analogous process in those parts of the world in which the forces of industrialization are just now beginning to be felt. The goal of such study is a clearer understanding of what it is that constitutes "modern consciousness."

Although *The Homeless Mind* is not yet available, some of the conclusions from the study which underlies it are to be found in an article "The Liberal as the Fall Guy," which appeared in a recent issue of the *Center Magaine*. There Berger notes the co-presence of modernizing and demodernizing processes in today's world. In most parts of the Third World modernization is the official goal and there are relatively few who resist it. Meanwhile, in those very nations where modernization has attained its greatest successes, "there are now appearing movements and tendencies that directly challenge some of the key propositions of modernity." (page 39) Berger utilizes three pairs of Talcott Parsons' pattern variables as "the most economical shorthand I know to point up the difference between more and less modern societies." The pairs are: collectivity interest versus self-interest, particularism versus universalism, and functional diffuseness versus functional specificity. In each pair the first listed represents a premodern tendency, the second a modern one. In each case one sees that the "modern" quality is more "abstract" than the quality which pertains to the pre-modern situation.[2] As society becomes increasingly abstract, the individual comes more and more to depend upon his activities in "the private sphere" as the means by which he finds meaning in life. But even this is problematic. The "abstractness" of the mass society infringes upon the fragile private sphere. Indeed, for many, the very separation of life into public and private spheres is experienced as "alienating" and the desire to "integrate" or find "wholeness" is an important element of contemporary consciousness.

Berger's analysis includes some elements which are familiar to persons who have read others of his books and essays. And the conclusion is familiar too. As Berger sees it, there are forces on both sides which are readying themselves for a showdown. But perhaps, he suggest, it would be possible for us to realize that both modernization and demodernization are social forces, responses to felt human needs. Neither should be seen as self-generating nor as inevitable.

> Those who think that modernity is an irresistible juggernaut, in America or in the Third World, will fall on their bottoms. But so will those who think that modernity can simply be junked. The problem, both sociologically and in terms of policy, is where the *limits* are -- the limits of modernity as well as the limits of demodernization.[3]

Everything, says Berger, is a trade-off. It is the business of sociological analysis to show us what our options are so that we might make intelligent choices. Berger suspects that we shall discover that modernization has generated benefits and values which we shall not want to give up. Perhaps we shall discover that modernity has also destroyed certain values that we would like to see revived. The point is: We are free to choose.

One is reminded by Berger's work on this subject of Max Weber's concern to understand the relationship between religious consciousness and the economic forces that were at work in the world. Having formulated this connection as he understood it to exist in modern Western society -- in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* -- Weber then turned his attention to exploring the same connections in other portions of the world. Among the results of this endeavor were his volumes on the religions of India, China, and the ancient Near East. Analogously, Berger has addressed himself to the question of the relationship between religion and modern consciousness. For him the key motif in understanding this relationship is the concept of secularization. His discussion of the shape of this relationship in contemporary Western society is to be found in *The Sacred Canopy*. With this task done Berger is prepared to turn his attention to the study of the same problem in non-Western societies.

Berger is also similar to Weber in his concern that we might learn the lessons of history well enough to save us from those dangerous over-reactions which are detrimental to social stability. Weber saw technology and its handmaiden bureaucracy as the most important forces contributing to the shape of modern society. In this judgment Berger concurs. Weber referred to the process by which technology and bureacracy reshape society as "rationalization." This is roughly the same thing that Berger calls "modernization." Weber realized that the advance of rationalization has within it the potential of calling forth a reaction of "irrationality" and he feared the turmoil that might come with such a reaction. Similarly, Berger fears the over-reaction which the forces of demodernization might unleash. He hopes for a more rational steering of course.

> I have already indicated that I am anything but a blind enthusiast for modernity. But neither can I be an enthusiastic advocate of demodernization. There is always the temptation of going from one extreme to the other, as if to verify over and over again the Spanish saying that history is like a drunken peasant riding down a narrow street on a blind burrow.[4]

One may also understand Berger's interest in modernization as yet one more example of his desire to analyze the various religion-surrogates which have emerged in the wake of the breakdown of Christian hegemony in the West. Modernization -- like Marxism and psychoanalysis -- makes certain messianic claims similar to those made in the past by traditional r[illegible] suspicious of every new messianism and underst[illegible] to be that of helping people see behind [illegible] pretensions of every comprehensive system [illegible] th in science and technology nor mindles[illegible] ter culture is warranted in Berger's view. [illegible] n that we ought to be sparing in our commitments. No [illegible] meaning is perfect; none is complete. Careful analysis will reveal the limitations of every empirical system of order and so deliver us from blind commitments.

Again and again throughout his career Berger analyzes elements of the social order so as to show us that they are human products and that we, therefore, are free to choose the extent to which we shall or shall not be involved in them.

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II

I have argued from the beginning that Berger's is a paradigmatic career. In his intellectual biography we can see things that are pertinent to the careers of others. He embodies many of the concerns of those who have thought most seriously about the religious situation of the West in the past fifteen years. His shifts of professional interest mirror important developments in sociological theory, in sociology of religion, in theology, and in the religiosity of the masses. The tensions and tangles which remain in his work are also problematic for many other serious students who are concerned with the forms and the place of religion in modern society.

He began as a constructive critic of the churches. A theological commitment, a lesson learned from Luther and Barth, led him to challenge the "received tradition" in both religious circles and in the sociology of religion and to insist instead that "church" does not exhaust the category "religion." Then he sought to establish himself as a secular social scientist while continuing *sub rosa* to do existentialist ethics. He wrote a novel about a sexually-deviant immigrant professor of history who sees life as a charade, a series of confidence games. Attila (the hero) knows how to "work the system" within discrete enclaves but he despairs of ever seeing things whole. He knows that battles in defense of sacred enclaves are destined to be lost. He expects no messianic deliverance. He is sustained only by his sense of irony.

The lesson of the importance of value-free inquiry learned from Weber and others via Schutz and others took root and the productive collaboration with Thomas Luckmann began. The result was a refor-

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mulation of the sociology of knowledge, a call for a critical examination and a search for the social causes of everything everybody knows. Berger then returned to the study of religion but this time with the intention of doing it scientifically. He did his best to treat religion as a human product but the result looked like a treatise in atheism so he devoted some energy to the demonstration of the fact that theology is still possible. But to show that one's theology is plausible, one must be able to explain and perhaps explain away all the other rival systems. So Berger devoted himself to the critical analysis of such religion-surrogates (alternative worldviews) as psychoanalysis, politics, science, and the youth culture. And the worldview he defended -- and still defends -- is a chastened theism rooted in a fear of both tyranny and chaos and snored up by the discoveries the social sciences and historical scholarship can make about our anthropological givenness, that is, our human nature.[5]

Berger, by his mid-forties, has been angry young prophet; author of a highly-opinionated best-selling paperback introduction to his royal game of sociology; marginal man to the sociological establishment; sober student of complexities; advocated of a new natural theology; perceptive student of comparative worldviews; compassionate-but-firm political conservative; and author of an expensive hard-cover introductory sociology textbook. There remains for us now the task of picking through that career, searching for some of its recurrent themes and for Berger's persistent concerns.

In much of what he writes, Berger seems to be intent upon expanding the scope of this or that form of inquiry: Sociology of religion

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must look at more than churches; qualitative analysis must be added to the quantitative. Sociology must be done in contact with the humanities. The occupational structure may not be understood apart from a macro-level analysis of Western society since Luther. It is impossible to understand institutions without an understanding of underlying forms of consciousness. The sociology of knowledge must be expanded so as to include all sorts of "knowledge," not just the ideas of the intellectual elite and the processes through which ideologies are formed. An adequate theology must be grounded in a sound philosophical anthropology and such a view of man cannot be formulated without the help of the social sciences. Similarly, political positions must be developed and defended in the context of an awareness of man's social nature. And so on. In all Berger's work one finds a concern to make comprehensive statements about human affairs and to explore the implications of discoveries in one field in related fields.

In almost everything he has written Berger manifests a deep moral concern. He constantly seeks non-partisan understanding of our social situations and -- implicitly -- solutions to our basic problems. He encourages us to see things clearly so that we can do the "right" thing, that is, so that we shall choose the course of action that will reduce the total amount of pain in the world. Social science is a means to the penultimate goals of social reform -- but it has its own inner logic and it makes demands of its practitioners. Therefore sociological inquiry cannot make any claims about "ultimate reality" -- but it can help us sift through the rubble of our ever-inadequate human arrangements and projections in the course of which search we just might discover signals of transcendence and resources for living.

Sociology, in Berger's view, can help free us from our unexamined assumptions and from the tyranny of our all-too-human institutions. But sociology also reminds us of our fundamental need for order and so does not lead to individualism.

> The human enterprise of producing a world is not comprehensible as an individual project. Rather, it is a social process: *men together* engage in constructing a world, which then becomes their common dwelling. . . . The world must be confirmed and re-confirmed *by others*.[6]

At the time when Berger began his writing career -- toward the end of the 1950s -- there were three major non-supernatural worldviews which were popular among intellectuals. These were Marxism, psychoanalysis, and existentialism. There is value in noting the shape of Berger's dialogue with each. Perhaps it would be fair to summarize his response to them as follows: he finds value in and uses many existentialist motifs; he has learned from Marx but is very suspicious of Marxists; he finds very little value in Freud and less still in Freudians.

In *The Precarious Vision* Berger affirmed the value of what he called "the anti-religious critique." Such a critical stance vis-a-vis religions -- those human efforts to discern the meaning of things -- he saw having high affinity with the Christian faith at its best. But interestingly, it is the anti-religious critique of the *existentialists* which Berger applauds. He does not make use of the Marxist and Freudian versions of that same critique. How are we to explain this?

Existentialism is the intellectual style that appeals most to the loner, the marginal man, the drop-out. In contrast, the Marxist needs to revolutionize structures, to form movements, to build new institutions. The Freudian movement is less imperialistic in its aims and a bit less prone to institution-building but it too is at least modestly messianic in many of its manifestations. It too offers a version of salvation to its adherents.[7]

Existentialism does not claim to be messianic. The French existentialists insisted that they sought no disciples. that they had no salvific message. In its encounter with existentialism Christianity could continue to make messianic claims without disrupting the dialogue. But Marxism and psychoanalysis demand the primary commitment of the individual and so are threats to Christianity.

Berger's preference for existentialism over the other two major secular alternatives was doubtless reinforced by the writings of Christian writers of an earlier generation in whose work a high affinity between existentialism and an enlightened Christianity was stressed. The writings of Rudolf Bultmann and Paul Tillich were important in this connection. The works of Bonhoeffer carried for Berger a strong existentialist strain and a connection between Bonhoeffer and Camus seemed very important to the young Peter Berger.

Although many sociologists of religion have deep personal interest in theology, Berger is almost unique in his willingness self-consciously to devote himself to theological exploration. One sees in this effort the results of a religious past but perhaps one also sees here evidence that Berger is aware of the close connection between world-contruction --

a task to which more and more are invited as technology lightens our load and education raises our consciousness. His theological writings -- and some of his political essays -- may be seen as part of an effort to do the *constructive* task, to contribute to the formulation of replacements for some of those elements of the status quo which have been dismantled by sociological inquiry and historical scholarship.

Berger is concerned throughout his corpus with the problem of freedom and he clearly sees that one of his major tasks is to demonstrate to people that they are free in some areas of their life in which they thought themselves not to be free. One of the fruits of the sociological imagination is that it makes clear to us that certain things which we had considered necessities were in fact optional. He clearly believes that we have grounds for believing "that it is possible to liberate oneself to a considerable degree from the taken-for-granted assumptions of one's time." (*Rumor*, 27)

But to the dismay of some of his younger and more radical readers Berger does not understand the current state of affairs to be the result of a conspiracy. It is here that he parts company from the posture popularized by C. Wright Mills in *The Power Elite*. Having described certain parameters of our taken-for-granted world in his essay on marriage, Berger writes:

> Needless to say, we are not suggesting that these functions are deliberately planned or even apprehended by some mythical ruling directorate of the society. Like most social phenomena, whether they be macro or microscopic, these functions are typically unintended and unarticulated. What is more, theirfunctionality would be impaired if it were too widely apprehended.[8]

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If there is no conspiracy and if the functionality of our patterns of interaction would be impaired if their origins were too widely apprehended, then why write about it at all? Here, I believe, one discovers the roots of Berger's conservatism. A part of him believes that freedom can be obtained if people will simply better understand the origins of their social conventions and the shape of their relationship to those conventions. But Berger also knows that too much knowledge about such things will demonstrate the arbitrary quality of the social conventions upon which we depend and when that happens people will withdraw from them the support they need if they are to survive. The result just might be unbearable chaos of the sort that might have been avoided if we had not seen quite so much -- or if we could see a bit more.[9] Thus the intellectual's task, in Berger's view, is to push on beyond the discoveries about the precariousness of the social order, beyond various revelations of the "illegitimacy" of the status quo. In that farther land where the debunkers are debunked, the need for order becomes apparent and the pretentions of every messianic scheme are shown up for what they are. Berger recommends that one be willing to continue to think critically even after one thinks that he has discovered the salvific plan.

It would seem that once one "sees through the fictions," he would never again be able to pretend that things are secure. Indeed, Berger himself writes in *Vision* that "once the apparatus of switches has been perceived, the stage never quite loses its precarious character." (page 19) But he who sees *still further* may come to appreciate how very important those structures are. The same

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sociological imagination through which we discover the arbitrariness of every social design also shows us that order is the fundamental requirement of social life.

III

What research interests, what kinds of writing may we expect from Berger in the next few years? His writings offer some clues to his interests upon which one might base a mixture of predictions and hopes.

Berger's writings of the past few years offer some clues to his interests. In the preface to *Marxism and Sociology* (pages ix f.) he mentioned three areas within which much of his own work has centered and to which he can be expected to return. (1) He sees the borderline between the social sciences and biology as an area of great importance to sociological theory. He sees the desirability of applying new discoveries in biology to anthropological theory. Here one detects the influence of Gehlen. (2) In the field of social psychology Berger feels there is still much to be done. Followers of Mead, he notes, understand the dialectical relationship between consciousness and society but have not developed an adequate theoretical grasp of social structure. Marxist thinkers offer strong analyses of social structure but tend to overlook the individual. (3) Berger also sees the need for a comprehensive theory of institutions, one that will include both the structural aspects and "the institutionalization of consciousness." Here again one may see the influence of Gehlen.

Berger might well devote himself to careful exploration of various phenomena on which he has repeatedly commented in his other writings. For example, a great deal of the illustrative and anecdotal material in his books and articles has to do with human sexuality and, in particular, with the meaning of sexual deviance. This same concern was reflected in Berger's novel and his friend Luckmann has proposed that wife-swapping might be studied as a religion-surrogate.[10] Yet despite this interest, Berger has not written so much as one article on sexuality and/or deviance. Similarly, Berger's writings are studded with large numbers of asides on the social meaning of death. Here again is a subject to which Berger might fruitfully address himself at article or book length.

Berger's published writings to date have not betrayed much interest in non-Western societies and, indeed, some readers have faulted him for his parochialism. The publication of *The Homeless Mind* will give evidence of a growing interest in non-Western societies. His work on the editorial board of the periodical *Worldview* has grown out of and in turn reinforced an interest in foreign affairs and in American foreign policy. We can probably expect to hear more from Berger on these matters in the next few years.

Although Berger has not published any theological writings in the last three years, he continues to have a strong interest in theology and might well have more to say in that area in the next few years. We might expect, in particular, more work on the problem of theodicy including a comparison of theistic and non-

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theistic modes of coping with failure, loss, and death.

We can also expect that Berger will continue to perform the "apologetic" function of commenting upon the rise and fall of various movements which serve as religion-surrogates for their adherents -- although he will probably continue to understand such explorations as something other than "sociology of religion." A contemporary version of the 1965 article on psychoanalysis, for example, might focus on the human potential movement.[11] Various forms of political commitment will undoubtedly continue to attract Berger's cutting commentary. Beyond that, we may expect that he will always be ready with a debunking analysis of whatever is "in" among the liberal intellectual establishment and their fellow travelers, the liberal clergy. Indeed, as the "orthodoxy" in these circles becomes more conservative in the 1970s we may well find Berger moving slightly to the left in order to find the ground from which to mount a critque.

This need to celebrate his marginality, to remain the slightly less than respectable debunker, will continue to make it unlikely that a stable group of disciples will unite behind Berger. Sociology is now in flux and many practitioners of the discipline are now looking for a guide who can fill for them the place that Parsons once filled. Clearly Berger is one of those important theorists who might be considered at this point. Although some commentators upon the state of the discipline believe that Berger will be one of the important figures in its future,[12] it is unlikely that he will become the chief guru for sociology. I would concur with Dennis Wrong's

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appraisal:

> Sociology today is once again a house of many mansions, and it is unlikely that any single approach, whether the approach of ethnomethodology, social constructionism, or neo-Marxist conflict theory, will establish an ascendency comparable to that acquired by structural-functionalism in the recent past.[13]

The pluralism which Berger has analyzed and named as a key element in both the religious situation of American society and the development of Western society in general also affects the academy. Within the discipline of sociology as in the society as a whole, "denominationalism" will prevail.

Regardless of what he does, no matter where he aims his energy, Berger is doing the same thing. It is hard to name but perhaps it would not be unfair to summarize it thus: He uses reason and the powers of observation in the task of meaning-making and, as a result of the knowledge that human answers often seem inadequate to human questions, he affirms our need for a transcendent order in which we might have confidence.

This is the basic business: *meaning-making*. Whether Peter Berger is scourging the churches or looking for freedom within determinism or redefining sociology of knowledge or analyzing secularization or dissecting psychoanalysis or trying to save theology or analyzing the political situation in hopes of showing up the pretensions of the latest claimant of our allegiance -- no matter what he is doing his concern is the same. His interests and his convictions have not substantially changed -- though the method, the focus, the rhetoric, and the mood *have* changed. In my exposition of Berger's thought and in the juxtaposition of quotations from his various writings I have sought to demonstrate that the same fundamental concerns are being addressed regardless of the particular discipline or "enclave" within which he claims to be working.

Peter Berger clearly believes that modern Western society is relatively humane. Reality, however, he knows to be socially constructed and therefore precaricus and this leads him to be a conservative, one who believes that we shall be better off not tampering with what we have. And yet Berger writes books that invite us to peak behind the scenes. He debunks. He unmasks. He defines his discipline in terms of its ability to show us that things are not what they seem. Thus he risks the undoing of precarious consensus. He jeopardizes the stability of the social order. Why? Why not be silent? Or go to work for the ruling order?

The answer, perhaps, is the concept of vocation. It is his calling. The sociologist is the modern prophet, a voice crying in the wilderness. He echoes Weber: "I want to see how much I can stand." The faithful prophet need not delight in his message. The courageous sociologist tells it like it is regardless of the consequences.

IV

How, finally, are we to understand Peter Berger's success -- his impact on the field of sociology of religion and beyond it? This question is analogous to the one the sociology of knowledge always raises. It is the question that Berger himself raises in

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his treatments of various religious options and religion-surrogates: What are the social forces which contribute to the success of any particular phenomenon?

Such a discussion must begin with the acknowledgement that Berger has two more or less discrete audiences and that he thinks of himself as having "two careers." (1) His first two books -- especially *The Noise of Solemn Assemblies* -- created an enthusiastic following for Berger among churchmen, both clergymen and laymen. Occasional articles for the *Christian Century* and other religious periodicals kept Berger's name before this audience and *A Rumor of Angels* brought him still more attention in the precincts of the faithful. Some religionists also read *The Sacred Canopy* but that book is not really accessible to a mass audience.

Berger is still the sociologist who is most apt to be read by persons who are committed to church religion. They find reassuring his insistence (in *Rumor*) that the secular critique of religion does not obliterate the possibility that God exists. His approach has its appeal not only to the devout but simple believer whose world seems constantly to be shaken by the secular world's incursions. It is also very attractive to clergymen -- whose education makes a genuinely sectarian stance unviable -- and to the intellectual who has some residual commitments to traditional religion. Like Schleiermacher, Berger serves to make the religious possibility respectable for the cultured despisers of the simple supernaturalism of the church-going masses.

(2) Berger began his "secular career" with the publication of *Invitation to Sociology* in 1963. That book attracted the attention of the sociological community. It was widely used in introductory courses and has been quoted appreciatively by some of the "radical sociologists" in the past few years. *The Social Construction of Reality* and *The Sacred Canopy* earned Berger a secure place in American sociology. The two collections of essays, *The Human Shape of Work* and *Marxism and Sociology* are also part of this secular career as is the introductory text *Sociology*. *Movement and Revolution*, a popular book on current affairs, has found readers in both religious and secular circles.

Many religionists are unaware of Berger's "secular" endeavors[14] and some sociologists are unaware of his writings on theology and the church. For many who are unaware of these two vectors of Berger's career, the fact of his attempting to work in both fields is a point in his favor and his ability to apply what he has learned in one sphere to problems met in the other is seen as a plus.[15] I have argued throughout this study that Berger's "two careers" are integrally related and that full understanding of either is hampered by lack of familiarity with the other. I wish here to suggest that Berger's popularity was enhanced by *both* his writing for what he views as two discrete audiences *and* his providing for some readers a point of contact, a bridge, between normative and scientific approaches to religion. Berger, in effect, has looked at religion from both the "inside" and the "outside." For this he has been criticized by some sociologists of religion -- and, for that matter, by some religionists as well. But this "double vision" finds a ready market among those persons both in the churches and in the

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academy who are seeking a synoptic vision of their own changing American society.

In chapter 1 I argued that a renewal of dependence upon traditional theological models -- a response to the wars and depressions of the first half of the twentieth century -- mitigated against any explorations in sociological theory which might examine too closely the wobbly religious consensus of the West. Only amid the peace and prosperity which followed World War II was it likely that the rather "subversive" inquiry begun by Feuerbach, Marx, Nietzsche, Durkheim, Weber, and Freud would again be taken up. Berger began his career at precisely that time when social conditions again encouraged the posing of the "tough questions" about Western religion. His deep personal interest in religion and his solid grounding in the classics of sociology made it likely that Berger would be among those who reintroduced those questions to the field. His attachment to a theological faculty kept such concerns before him and his move to a secular institution encouraged the development of a more scientific perspective from which to conduct such inquiry.

Berger's interest in social change and his iconoclastic wit made him an attractive figure to many readers in the turbulent 60s -- a decade high on skepticism and anti-authoritarianism. It was a time during which large numbers of people could resonate to Berger's dictum: "The first wisdom of sociology is this -- things are not what they seem." (*Invitation*, 23) The churches, incidentally, reflected the general confusion in an orgy of self-criticism, in ecumenical experimentation, and in the secularization of theology. These developments helped assure Berger a large readership among churchmen.

In seeking reasons for Berger's impact on the sociology of religion one might argue that his reformulation of the tasks of the field was simply an idea whose time had come. He capitalized on a vague but growing discontent with an empirical sociology of religion of microscopic focus. He successfully challenged the objectivity of sociologists who were in the employ of religious institutions. He responded to and contributed to a "rediscovery" of the classics which development was in turn a mark of sociology's renewed concern to affirm its affinity with the humanities. Meanwhile, in sociological theory generally the erosion of Parsonian dominance created a vacuum into which some other comprehensive theoretical perspective might move.

I believe that all of these elements played a part in securing for Berger considerable recognition in his field. But a less "pure," less ideal explanation also suggests itself. It might be argued that Berger supplied some sociologists of religion and departments of religious studies with a way of saving their dying field of study -- and their jobs. As long as the sociology of religion was defined in terms of church religion (which, by the testimony of most empirical studies, seems to be steadily losing ground), the sociology of religion could only decline as the object of its study declined. And if *that* were to happen, where would we get jobs for our graduate students? Berger has helped to legitimate the study -- under the rubric "sociology of religion" -- of a wide variety of phenomena and processes *other* than churches. In this way the sociology of religion is guaranteed an abundance of objects for inquiry.

It is important to note once more that when Berger analyzes systems of meaning which do not posit the existence of a sacred cosmos, he does not call what he is doing "sociology of religion." Rather, he thinks of such explorations as exercises in the sociology of knowledge. But careful reading of Berger's books and articles reveals that he employs the same method when he writes about various secular phenomena as he does when the object of his analysis is an aspect of traditional religion. Thus one is led to discount Berger's arbitrary division of concerns into "religious" and "secular" categories. Luckmann adopts what appears to me to be the more consistent position of being willing to treat as a religion anything that gives the individual distance on himself and makes him feel part of a larger system of order. But unfortunately Luckmann has not turned his attention to the detailed analysis of the particular social phenomena which serve as religion-surrogates for some moderns. Berger has.

Berger's popularity with all sorts of readers is enhanced by his style. He writes well and people seem to enjoy reading what he writes. Almost every reviewer has commented on his masterful use of anecdotes and humor. Recognizing the fictional nature of social reality seems to liberate Berger and make it possible for him to indulge in some of the prerogatives of a writer of fiction or a story-teller -- as though to write fiction makes it less likely that one will be taken in by the fictions others write. His style, as I have suggested above, is more than an esthetic preference. It is central to his way of thinking. The comic, the fictional, and the absurd are parts of Berger's intellectual manner and they find expression in the way he writes. Indeed, one sometimes wonders if perhaps his great fear of rhetoric might not stem from his own knowledge, first hand, of the power of the rhetorician.

Notes to Chapter 8

1. *The Homeless Mind*, with Brigitte Berger and Hansfried Kellner (New York: Random House, 1973).

2. Cf. Anton C. Zijderveld, *The Abstract Society*.

3. "The Liberal as the Fall Guy," p. 43. Similarly, Mircea Eliade has argued that both cosmic (traditional) and historical (modern) consciousness can exist together in the world. Neither need necessarily drive out the other. Cf. *Cosmos and History* (New York: Harper and Row, 1954), especially chapter 4.

4. "Liberal," p. 43.

5. For a discussion of the possibility of deriving a view of human nature from the social sciences, see Ernest Becker, "What Is *Basic* Human Nature?" in *Angel in Armor* (New York: Braziller, 1969).

6. "Reification and the Sociological Critique of Consciousness," p. 201, emphasis in the original.

7. For a criticism of these elements of psychoanalysis, see Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic*, especially chapter 4.

8. "Marriage and the Construction of Reality," p. 18.

9. In this connection there is value in remembering that Voltaire wanted his servants and his wife to continue believing in God.

10. *The Invisible Religion*, p. 106.

11. Cf. Thomas C. Oden, *The Intensive Group Experience: The New Pietism* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972).

12. See, for example, Friedrichs, *A Sociology of Sociology*, chapter 12.

13. *American Sociologist*, August 1971, p. 252.

14. "A Call for Authority in the Christian Community," p. 1257.

15. See, for example, Berger's article "Charisma and Innovation: The Social Location of Israelite Prophecy," in which he related recent advances in Old Testament scholarship to Weber's theory of charisma.

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Chapter 9 THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION

The Study of Values and Ultimate Concerns

Religion cannot disappear;
it can only be transformed.

Saint-Simon

If you find you no longer believe,
enlarge the temple.

W. S. Merwin

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Elements of a new sociology of religion. I. Rooted in the classics. II. Begin with human nature, not institutions. III. Functional definition of religion; study religion-surrogates. IV. Soft-pedal the secularization motif. V. The future of religion. VI. Theological implications. VII. A sociology of values and ultimate concerns.

There remains the task of setting forth some of the elements of a "reconstructed" sociology of religion which have emerged in the course of this study. The result will *not* be a summary of Peter Berger's approach to the field. Although Berger is certainly one of the key contributors to the synthesis offered here, he is by no means its sole architect. Some elements of the approach outlined here come directly from Berger. Others are implicit in his work. Still others stand in some tension with his formulations. I shall try to give some indication of the extent of Berger's contribution in connection with each of the elements as they are discussed.

The "reconstruction" to which I refer is a development that I favor but it is not merely a figment of my imagination nor an extension of my hopes. The reconstruction is now in progress -- not as a formal organization but in the work of a substantial number of scholars, some quite prominent, others less well know. Some have been mentioned in the course of this study; others will be named in these closing paragraphs. These persons do not think of themselves as a "movement" and some of them would be reluctant to have their work labelled "sociology of religion." Not all of them would approve of every element of my summation nor acknowledge their affinity with all of the others mentioned, but it is my contention that it is legitimate to view them together and so to associate them in a general way with the following principles.

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It should be acknowledged from the outset that this cluster of concerns describes what is probably a minority position among professionals who call themselves sociologists of religion and, in some of its particulars, it violates "commonsense" understanding of "religion." I see these elements comprising one legitimate approach to the sociology of religion, not the *only* legitimate approach.

I

The sociology of religion must return to the classics, to the seminal work of those late nineteenth and early twentieth century thinkers who initiated the scientific study of religion. The anthropological studies and the extensive survey research of the intervening decades have not moved us substantially beyond the level of theoretical sophistication manifested by Durkheim and Weber. Neither have more recent psychological approaches to religion eroded the importance of the work of Nietzsche and Freud.

Explorations in the works of earlier thinkers such as Plato, Lucretius, Augustine, Vico, Hobbes, and Rousseau can serve as valuable supplements because these men were imaginative students of the relationships between religious worldviews and other social factors and of the relationships between systems of meaning and individual consciousness.

There is also a need for search for the *implications* for the sociology of religion in the work of theorists who did not directly address themselves to the study of religious phenomena. Berger, for example, not only grounded his sociology of religion in the work of Marx,

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Durkheim, and Weber, but also showed how the thought of George Herbert Mead and of Alfred Schutz could be utilized in the field. Similarly, Robbert Bobilin has developed the sociology of religion implicit in the work of Karl Mannheim.[1] The provocative writings of Thorstein Veblen, William Graham Sumner, and others await such analysis.

II

The sociology of religion must begin with the study of human nature, not with the study of the institutional status quo. We shall not understand particular manifestations of religion until we better understand the intrinsic human needs in response to which religions and religion-surrogates arise. The work of Berger and Luckmann manifests the concern to seek out elements of our anthropological givenness and to develop an understanding of social strucutre, religious phenomena, and individual consciousness rooted therein. For example, Berger believes that man's longing for security within a predictable system of order is an intrinsic quality of the species. Religious phenomena -- and other social structures -- arise in response to this basic need.

But advocacy of a mode of sociological analysis which gives more attention to the macro-level ought not be allowed to result in our overlooking the lessons which are to be learned from a close look at existing institutions and from the use of data descriptive of the human situation in other times and places. Indeed, material from cultural anthropology and the discoveries of careful historical scholarship are the *sine*

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qua non of adequate macro-level theory. Berger may be faulted for being at times too much the arm chair sociologist. His work suffers from his apparent disdain toward survey research and his relatively shallow understanding of primitive and non-Western religions.

Berger's work is also flawed by his unwillingness to seek more precise delineations of this or that "basic" human quality. To return to our example, he rightly names man's longing for security and his propensity to construct systems of order as a fundamental aspect of human nature. But he gives relatively little attention to the question of the extent to which the perceived need for a given set of boundaries might be socially conditioned and hence variable. Thus he leaves unanswered some questions which flow quite naturally from the things he has written: How *much* order do we require? Is there an intrinsic need for variety and perhaps even for adventure, for *risk*, against which our need for order must be balanced?[2] Is it possible that those who enjoy orderly and secure lives require *less* guarantee of an orderly transcendent sphere than those whose lives are turbulent and filled with anomie?

III

Two further elements are closely interrelated. *The sociology of religion should employ a functional definition of religion.* This implies that *the sociology of religion should study religion-surrogates*, the functional equivalents of religion, in addition to traditional forms of religion.

Substantive definitions of religion prevent the discipline from taking a close look at the various non-supernaturalistic worldviews which have taken the place of traditional religions in the consciousness of many moderns. It is probable that these alternate systems of macro-meaning will continue to be socially important as least for the near future. In terms of long-range projections, the trends suggest that the number of religions and religion-surrogates in Western society is more apt to increase than to decrease. Further, since humanistic alternatives to traditional religion appeal most to the better-educated and more affluent (and hence more influential) members of the society, some of the humanistic religion-surrogates are apt to have impact greater than their relatively small number of adherents would lead one to expect.[3]

Peter Berger, as we have seen, is a perceptive analyst of religion-surrogates but he does not call the objects of these analyses religions or religion-surrogates nor does he think of such explorations as exercises in the sociology of religion. Further, he explicitly opts for a substantive definition of religion.

The difference between Berger's position and the one proposed here is a real one but it is not as great as might at first glance seem to be the case. The difference is more one of labeling than of method. That Berger *encourages and performs* sociological analyses of religion-surrogates is more important than what he *names* such analyses.

A case can certainly be made for using the word *religion* to refer only to supernaturalistic systems of order. There would be little value in the discipline's becoming mired in lengthy debate at this point and I do not wish to do so here. It is appropriate, however, that I mention an analogy offered by Milton Yinger in this connection, an analogy which I find helpful.

> In structural linguistics, the various elements or dimensions of language have been identified -- phonology, semantics, grammar, etc. One determines whether or not any given system of sounds is a language by the presence or absence of these constituent elements. We can observe the shifts from Beowulf to Chaucer to Shakespeare to Tennyson to Eliot without saying that the latter forms are nonlanguage, that they have been "secularized." In the same manner, let us design measures of continuity and change in religion without presuppositions that some efforts to deal with man's ultimate problems -- those new and only slightly institutionalized, for example -- can be disregarded. Let us ask our respondents to "speak their religion" to us, uninstructed by our own preconceptions.[4]

Yinger concedes that one might reasonably argue that the word *religion* ought to be reserved for traditional religion but he also offers some reasons for a more inclusive use of the word. He confesses that his preference is partly valuative and strategic:

> I think that such a usage may help to smooth mankind's way from declining "ultimate belief systems" that have become irrelevant or uncommunicative to the contemporary ear, toward those that can more successfully maintain our concern for the permanent problems of the human situation.

But, he adds, his preference is also based on a scholarly judgment:

> We are less likely to overlook the invisible, the emergent systems of ultimate beliefs and actions, and therefore less likely to overlook the analytic similarities with older, more visible systems if we place them all within a major category labelled by a word already possessing a wide range of connotations -- namely, religion.[5]

One danger in a functional definition is that the researcher utilizing it will cast his net too widely and scatter his efforts over so many alleged religion-surrogates that he does not do an effective job with any of them. Yinger proposes some boundaries which can help deliver us from such a dilution of our energies. The boundaries are implicit in his definition of religion:

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> Where one finds *awareness of and interest in the continuing, recurrent, "permanent" problems of human existence* -- the human condition itself, as contrasted with specific problems; where one finds *rites and shared beliefs relevant to that awareness which define the strategy of an ultimate victory*; and where one has *groups organized to heighten that awareness and to teach and maintain those rites and beliefs* -- there you have religion.[6]

Yinger, then, has included ritual, beliefs, and self-conscious community as elements of his definition. Like Joachim Wach, he is reluctant to use the term *religion* with reference to a phenomenon which does not manifest all three dimensions. Thus he excludes individual systems of belief from the category *religion* -- although he concedes that private systems of belief and action may have religious aspects.[7]

I find Yinger's "correctives" on Berger very helpful. The contributions of Bellah and Luckmann are also of value in this connection.[8] It should be recalled, moreover, that a functional approach to religion has a long and distinguished history which may be traced through the works of Comte and Durkheim (in sociology), Malinowski (in anthropology), and ? Tillich (in philosophy and theology).

In turn now, I would like to propose three further modifications or extensions of Yinger's functional approach. (a) If we adopt the convention of using the label *religion-surrogate* rather than *religion* to name systems of order other than traditional religions, we shall avoid much of the confusion that the qualified use of the word *religion* often generates in thoughtful discourse.[9]

(b) Yinger makes no mention of the religion-surrogates which appeal to persons of below middle-class socio-economic status. As important as are sociological analyses of Marxism, psychoanalysis, the human potential movement, various political reform movements, and the psyche-

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delic drug culture, we must not fail to locate and analyze other cosmoi such as those of sports (especially football, especially on television), the state lotteries and other forms of gambling, astrology, ethnic identity (especially the black experience), familism, all-male outings for hunting and fishing, and the heroin culture. Such an extension of a "sociology of religion-surrogates" would be analogous to the expansion of the sociology of knowledge which Berger and Luckmann advocate in *The Social Construction of Reality*.

It may be objected that such religion-surrogates do not generate commitments which dominate the "whole lives" of those involved or that the "practitioners" cannot articulate a clear understanding of their "faiths." But these same criticisms can be and often are aimed at the traditional religions as well. (Interestingly, it is Berger who here "corrects" Yinger with his suggestion that the folk religion is as worthy of careful study as the pronouncements of the theologians and ecclesiastics.) Similarly, the materialism which is an important part of some of these alternate systems is very much a part of the popular piety of many church-goers.[10] Glock and Stark and others have shown that many practitioners of traditional religions do not accept some of the supernaturalistic claims of their faiths.[11] We ought not, then, demand supernaturalism as an element of religion-surrogates.

(c) Yinger fails to address the fact that many of the religion-surrogates "do less" than traditional religions did. That is, humanistic worldviews make less sweeping claims, less grand promises than does, for example, conservative Christianity. Most religion-surrogates offer no guarantees of personal immortality or promises of divine intervention on behalf of the faithful.

Richard Fenn has argued that Western society no longer has one "overarching" view of its values and that there will never again be a religious consensus of the sort that Christendom once knew. In such a context we can expect to encounter religions and religion-surrogates which do not claim to be the "only way" and which make relatively modest promises about what they can "deliver." The sociology of religion ought not overlook them simply because they do not make all the same claims which their more traditional predecessors made.

There is evidence which suggests that sociologists of religion are ready to give some attention to religion-surrogates. For example, in his 1969 presidential address to the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Charles Glock -- a scholar best known for his survey-based analyses of church religion -- encouraged a macro-analysis of the evolution of imagery and institutions in the West. He mentioned Marxism, science, sports, and drugs as religion-surrogates. Glock is currently engaged in research -- in partnership with Robert Bellah and others -- focusing on new forms of religious consciousness among youth. Attention is being given to Eastern religions and to the counter culture.[12]

The shift of focus suggested here ought not be interpreted as a call for an end to the study of religious institutions, formal theologies, and the like. The "sociology of the churches" should continue to be practiced; we shall continue to find value in the discoveries made by this kind of research. Indeed, there are some signs which suggest that a renascence of institutional religion is taking shape, especially in the more conservative denominations.[13]

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But micro-analysis of traditional religion ought to be seen as part of a larger sociology of religion in the context of which the study of particular religions and religion-surrogates will never be undertaken for their own sakes. Rather, the persistent concern would be to see how the "religious phenomenon" under consideration relates to other dimensions of life. Such an approach would give quite a bit of its energy to cultural analysis and to intellectual history. If, as Tillich has suggested, religion is the depth dimension of every cultural manifestation, then an enlarged sociology of religion would consist of the study of the depth dimension of every cultural manifestation.

IV

The sociology of religion should move away from its dependence on the "secularization" motif. In his helpful overview of the sociology of religion, Pieter Hendrik Vrijhof concludes that, on the whole, work in the field today is based on a dichotomy of religion and society.[14] This is the split which must be overcome. Our ability to understand important commitment patterns in contemporary society is hampered by dependence upon "commonsense" division of life into "religious" and "secular" realms -- and by the assumption that we can measure the decline of the one and the advance of the other. As Larry Shiner has written: "If we begin with a sacred/profane or religious/secular dichotomy every piece of evidence tends to get polarized from the beginning and we end up with artificial paradoxes."[15]

Every cultural development which seems to challenge traditional religion has some potential for becoming part of an alternative approach to the business of organizing life into a meaningful gestalt. Sociologists of religion are among those best prepared to analyze such new developments, to comment upon their continuities with and discontinuities from traditional religion, and to describe the impact of new systems of meaning upon individual consciousness. Such inquiry into the meaning of significant events and movements is too important to leave to the journalists.

Every symbol system has implications for social cohesion and/or for personal integration and, as such, is a fit object for an analysis rooted in the sociology of religion -- whether its trappings and rhetoric are "religious" or "secular." Our proper task is the sociological analysis of every pattern of self-conscious reflection on the questions *What holds* us *together?* and *What holds* me *together?* Berger has helped us see that these two questions must be approached together rather than fenced off from one another as the private preserves of the sociologist and the psychologist respectively.

Our inquiry should not be limited to systems which work or claim to work on a whole-society or world-wide basis. National consensus is an important question worthy of our research energies but we must not overlook those smaller groupings which give day-to-day meaning and personal security to the individuals who make up the society. I find value in Fenn's suggestion that we concede that there is no single overarching system of meaning in Western society and that we direct our research to the study of those forms of association and social contract that give our social life whatever stability it has.

Berger's analyses of alternate systems of meaning are models of perceptive research and reporting but his reluctance to see such phenomena as functional equivalents of traditional religion inhibits both the descriptive and the larger theoretical task. His continued use of the concept of secularization and his insistence that "religion" and "society" are finite and mutually-exclusive (though interdependent) categories limits his usefulness as the discipline seeks the larger theory within which to make sense out of recent history. Traces of the influence of Luther and Barth predispose Berger to resist a reconceptualization of "religion" which would include "secular" elements.

V

The sociology of religion should give attention to the future of religion. But, again, we ought not content ourselves with projections of the probable future of its institutional manifestations.[16] Rather, the object of our attention must be the larger religious consciousness in process. Berger offers a provocative discussion of the methodological problem which faces the discipline in the last chapter of his introductory text. He writes:

> If one takes the narrower, more conventional definition of religion, then one must ask what, in the wake of secularization, has taken the place of the previous religious meanings. If, on the other hand, one operates with the broader, Durkheimian definition of religion, then the term "secularization" is not too helpful. In this approach society *always* has "religion." The question now becomes: What kind of new "religion" is emerging to take over from the older traditions? But whichever definition one chooses, one must confront the

> same underlying fact: the breakdown in an overarching view of reality that was formerly provided by the religious traditions of Western civilization. (*Sociology*, 354)

If one grants the Durkheimian premise that no human society exists without an overarching view of reality, Berger tells us, then the contemporary absence of such a comprehensive view must necessarily be temporary. New comprehensive orders of meaning will necessarily emerge. These may be "religious" in the traditional sense of the word -- either new religions or resurgences of old ones -- or they may be "secular." Here Berger mentions political movements and "the new cult of sensitivity." Then he continues:

> If, on the other hand, the Durkheimian premise is not granted, an entirely different scenario is possible. One would then have to argue that modern society is peculiar and not comparable with earlier societies, precisely in that it is *not* in need of an overarching view of reality. It would then be possible to envisage the long duration of a new kind of society marked by pluralism in the most far-reaching sense of the word. Different groups or sectors in the society would have widely discrepant views as to the ultimate meaning of life, and yet would exist side by side. In that case, society *as a whole* would no longer have the solidarity of which Durkheim spoke. The different groups within it would be related to each other contractually, that is, not by a common allegiance to values and ultimate meanings but by rational arrangements that will meet their respective interests. The great majority of sociologists continue to grant the basic Durkheimian premise, and they must therefor choose between prognoses that are based on it. (*Sociology*, 355)

But as helpful as this analysis is, it is flawed. Long before Durkheim wrote, Western society was marked by pluralism in the matter of definitions of ultimate reality. The beginnings of this heterogeneity can perhaps be found in the Renaissance. It took a quantum leap with the Reformation and has been pushed along in the United States by a proliferation of sects. It may be argued, to be sure, that further fragmentations since World War II constitute yet another quantum leap. Indeed, whereas earlier pluralism manifested itself mostly in arguments about the attributes of God and his will for human beings, the post-war pluralism is increasingly marked by the absence of belief in the existence of God -- or, indeed, by the absence of belief in *any* comprehensive and coherent system of meaning. Perhaps there has also been an increase in the number of people who, although they believe that there is a God, make no very conscious efforts to shape their lives in accordance with his alleged will.

So rather than saying that there was once consensus and now, suddenly there is not, it might be more helpful to say that (a) the consensus has been eroding for a long time and that the process of its erosion has accelerated in the past two decades with the result that (b) fewer people than ever before govern themselves in accordance with a "divinely-given" pattern *and* that (c) more people than ever before can begin to articulate meaning systems -- some of them quite partial -- which for them *replace* the older religious consensus.

It seems probable that this process will continue -- although there are evidences to suggest that the rate of increase will be a bit slower in the 1970s than it was in the 60s. It is highly unrealistic to expect that Americans will regroup behind any single overarching definition of reality, be it one that claims to put one in touch with the divine -- such as neo-fundamentalism -- or one which has a more this-worldly orientation -- such as the human potential movement. Such movements will come and go; some will do better than others; but none is likely to become the new "orthodoxy" that will bring together that which has irrevocable flown apart.

It confuses the issue to oversimplify the Durkheimian understanding and say, as Berger does, that either Durkheim was right (a society must have an overarching scheme of meaning in which all but a few deviants believe) or he was wrong (a society does *not* need such a scheme of meaning). The question is: What *kind* of consensus is required if society is to cohere? Given some degree of pluralism, what are the lower limits of the consensus without which the society will disintegrate?

It may be fairly argued that we already live in the kind of post-consensus world which Berger describes. Much of our daily life is based on rational arrangement, on contract -- social contract -- and *not* on shared conceptions of overarching reality. Most of us are more concerned that our fellow-man pay his bills and stop for red lights than that he share our definition of ultimate reality. The task for the sociology of religion is neither to chart the decline of the old consensus and the institutions which bore it nor to look around for the single new religion that will take their place. Rather, we must ask: What are the elements of that consensus without which society disintegrates and/or life becomes unbearable? Put differently: How much pluralism is in the best interest of the members of society? Or again: What values are basic to human happiness and how may they be fostered?

As long as Western society had only one principal means of seeking self-understanding -- namely, supernaturalistic religion -- it was appropriate that the sociology of religion invest most of its energies in trying to understand those supernaturalistic systems. In our own time, however, many alternate modes of understanding have emerged -- some of them decidedly without supernaturalistic elements. It is, then, the ob-

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ligation of the sociology of religion to investigate the new modes of understanding with the same kind of critical energy which it earlier addressed to the study of supernaturalistic religion.

Berger's affinity with the approach proposed here is signaled in the last paragraph of the introductory text. There he notes what he calls "a more profound implication" of Durkheim's interpretation of religion. *Not only is religion a social phenomenon. Society is a religious phenomenon.*[17] This, Berger concludes, means that

> just as every social situation is dependent upon the definitions of the situation that the participants bring to it, so society as a whole is constituted by the definitions of reality that prevail in it. Reality is socially defined, but society is in turn constituted by virtue of these definitions. In the final analysis, society is a community of meaning. (*Sociology*, 355)

Berger, then, realizes that traditional religions and a whole host of non-supernaturalistic symbol systems are part of a larger search for meaning in the society. His recognition of the growing importance of "secular" symbol systems and his analyses of selected ones constitute important contributions to the field.

VI

The sociology of religion should not seek to avoid the theological implications of the study of religion. Religions and religion-surrogates are efforts toward the construction of comprehensive systems of meaning. The social scientist who studies these efforts, in turn, attempts to construct a still more comprehensive system of meaning within which the religious efforts make sense. Thus he is, in effect, saying to the religionist: "My master paradigm is superior to your master paradigm." Robert Bellah, looking back upon an earlier phase of his career as a teacher of the sociology of religion, has recently written:

> In spite of my theoretical recognition that religion deals with the most fundamental issues, I was really arguing that my own allegedly scientific concepts had a higher ontological status than the religious realm I was studying. . . . It did not consciously occur to me that what was going on was a conflict of religious worldviews. What I was doing, I thought, was science; what the poor people I studied were doing was religion and my science understood their religion.[18]

The sociology of religion must become aware that its discoveries and theories may have impact upon the beliefs and actions of those it studies *and* that a social scientific perspective on religion may itself be part of the scientist's worldview, that is, his "theology." Of course, such a worldview does not necessarily involve belief in God. Thus the word *theology*, taken literally, is inappropriate. If, however, we define *theology* not as "words about God" but rather as "words about one's ultimate concern," then *theology* and *worldview* would be functional equivalents. (The word *ultimate* as used here does not necessarily point to the God of theistic religion. It may simply be used to refer to that which matters most.)

Peter Berger, as we have noted, has given part of his intellectual energy to theological thinking and writing. To be sure, he always insists that his theology and his work in sociology are separate activities. When he writes theology he seeks to bracket his commitment to the social scientific perspective even as, when he writes sociology, he seeks to bracket his theological commitments. But perhaps Berger writes theology because he can do no other. Perhaps his inquiry into the religious situation -- using

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the tools of sociology -- makes it necessary that he give himself to the synthetic task. It is not enough to analyze and debunk. It is not enough to show up the limitations of existing systems of order. Finally one must begin to construct one's own system of order. The only way to escape anomie, the only way to survive in a world of cardboard facades, is to develop one's own version of the precarious vision and to delight in one's ability to see through the fictions and to devise workable alternatives.

Berger's theological writings, then, must be seen as part of a total career and not as optional footnotes jotted down by one who has "a personal affection for theologians." Authentic thinking man, Berger tells us, sees through the fictions which surround him and then, of necessity, becomes the builder of a sustaining system. In Blake's words: "I must create a system or be enslaved by another man's."

Berger has suggested that theology might have as its point of departure the empirically available data of life in the social world. His is a theology grounded in our nature and in our "second nature," not in our supernature -- although for Berger these data point to the supernatural. Some persons, as I suggested in chapter 5, will find value in utilizing Berger's theological starting points but without moving as he does to the conclusion that the "signals of transcendence" available in this life point to or correspond to some transcendent reality beyond this life. One might, instead, understand theology simply as a search for the "common denominator" -- that is, for those qualities which all human beings have in common and which serve as the basis for every human community.

In other words, sociologists who follow up the theological implications of the sociological study of religion will not all arrive at the

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chastened theism of Peter Berger, nor, for that matter, the Tillichian mysticism of Robert Bellah. One might instead develop a death of God theology as did Feuerbach, Nietzsche, and the radical theologians of the 1960s. But regardless of the particulars which emerge, the sociological study of religion, if taken beyond the level of church-research and the dispassionate probing of the past, can carry the investigator into a rather self-conscious search for a more adequate worldview.

VII

The approach to the sociology of religion proposed here is, in my judgment, called for by the shifts in religious consciousness currently in progress in Western society. Further, I believe that the elements of the approach developed in this study and summarized above are consistent with the work of the founders of the sociology of religion. Indeed, the kind of inquiry encouraged here probably has higher affinity with the work of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber than do most of the narrowly empirical studies of religious phenomena which dominated the discipline for several decades after the death of Weber. Nevertheless, I concede that to include under the label *sociology of religion* the study of phenomena which do not fit into the category of "religion" as commonly understood can be confusing to both laymen and sociologists. I can, therefore, see some merit in calling the kind of study proposed here *the sociology of values and ultimate concerns.*[19] There is nothing sacred (i.e. untouchable) about the name *sociology of religion*. Before Comte came up with the name *sociology* he called his new science *social physics*. Sometimes different is better.

But quite apart from the problem of nomenclature, there are other sources of resistance to the kind of reconstruction outlined here. If, for example, the focus of the sociology of religion were enlarged so that *everyone's* quest for meaning was subjected to scientific scrutiny, the beliefs of the sociologists would no longer be exempt from analysis and critique. As long as religion is defined so as to include only orthodox versions of traditional religions, sociologists of religion who are not, for example, Christians can view themselves as standing outside of the religious communities they study. This transcendent location gives a superior feeling. It is perhaps for this reason that so much is written about primitive religions, weird sects, and the fundamentalism which the sociologist feels he has "outgrown."

But if the sociology of religion begins to concern itself with, for example, the quest for meaning in the post-traditional world, *then* the sociologist becomes just one more seeker after truth. He is among those whom he studies. At best he can hope that the sophistication of his method and his cosmopolitan knowledge will enable him to see things a little more clearly -- and perhaps with fewer blind spots -- than others in a similar situation. But this "qualified expertise" is less enjoyable than the expertise enjoyed by the detached observer. One's *angst* about meaning questions goes on display. The outcome of one's inquiry has implications for one's own beliefs, for one's own life. This is scary and because it is scary many sociolgists seek to avoid it.

A sociology of religion which looks at the contemporary quest for meaning calls for a wide knowledge of the history of religions and an

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up-to-date knowledge of a whole host of religion-surrogates. Such a sociology of religion can, then, no longer be one of several branches of sociology which one has "mastered." It becomes rather a full time interest which one shares with others -- some of whom are not sociologists by training. Indeed, the approach proposed here leads one in time to ask: Is the sociology of religion a division of sociology *or* is it rather sociology's attempt to contribute to some *larger* quest of which even sociology is but part?

Notes to Chapter 9

1. Robert T. Bobilin, "Karl Mannheim's Unfinished Sociology of Religion."

2. Cf. Samuel Z. Klausner, ed., *Why Man Takes Chances: Studies in Stress-seeking* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1968) and Stanford M. Lyman and Marvin B. Scott, *The Sociology of the Absurd*.

3. This is analogous to the disproportionately large influence of the relatively small Unitarian and Quaker groups in the United States.

4. Yinger, "A Structural Examination of Religion," p. 91.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 99.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 91, emphasis in the original.

7. *The Scientific Study of Religion*, p. 10.

8. Cf. Bellah, *Beyond Belief*, especially chapters 11 and 13 and Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion*, especially chapters IV, VI, and VII.

9. Similarly, the term *traditional religions* ought to be employed when one wishes to exclude from consideration systems of meaning which do not posit the existence of a sacred cosmos.

10. It should be noted, however, that the faithful are promised wealth in this life in certain American religions and religion-surrogates. The black evangelist who calls himself "Reverend Ike" says: "Are you still waiting for pie in the sky by-and-by when you die? Get yours now with ice cream on top!" (Advertisement in the *New York Times*, January 22, 1973.) And W. Clement Stone, one of the richest men in the world, makes inspirational recorded messages -- urging Positive Mental Attitude -- which his employees can dial at any hour of the day and night. (Reported in *Intellectual Digest*, August 1972, pp. 18ff.)

11. Glock and Stark, *Religion and Society in Tension*, chapter 5 and Stark and Glock, *American Piety*, chapter 2.

12. See Glock, "Images of 'God,' Images of Man, and the Organization of Social Life," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 11:1, pp. 1ff. See also Robert Wuthnow and Charles Y. Glock, "New Forms of Religious Consciousness Among College Youth."

13. See Dean M. Kelley, *Why Conservative Churches are Growing* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972) and Edward B. Fiske, "Ebb of Liberalism Seen in Churches," *New York Times*, January 7, 1973.

14. "What is the Sociology of Religion?" in Joan Brothers, ed., *Readings in the Sociology of Religion*, p. 37.

15. Larry Shiner, "Sacred Space, Profane Space, Human Space," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, XL:4 (December 1972), p. 435.

16. Andrew M. Greeley's helpful book *Religion in the Year 2000* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1969) is flawed by its overconcern with institutional religion and with theologies, liturgies, and the like.

17. This formulation, I believe, was coined by Parsons in *The Structure of Social Action*. Berger does not give a source.

18. "Confessions of a Former Establishment Fundamentalist," *Council on the Study of Religion Bulletin*, 1:3 (December 1970).

19. Yinger suggests the label *sociology of "ultimate belief systems,"* in "A Structural Examination of Religion," p. 98.

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